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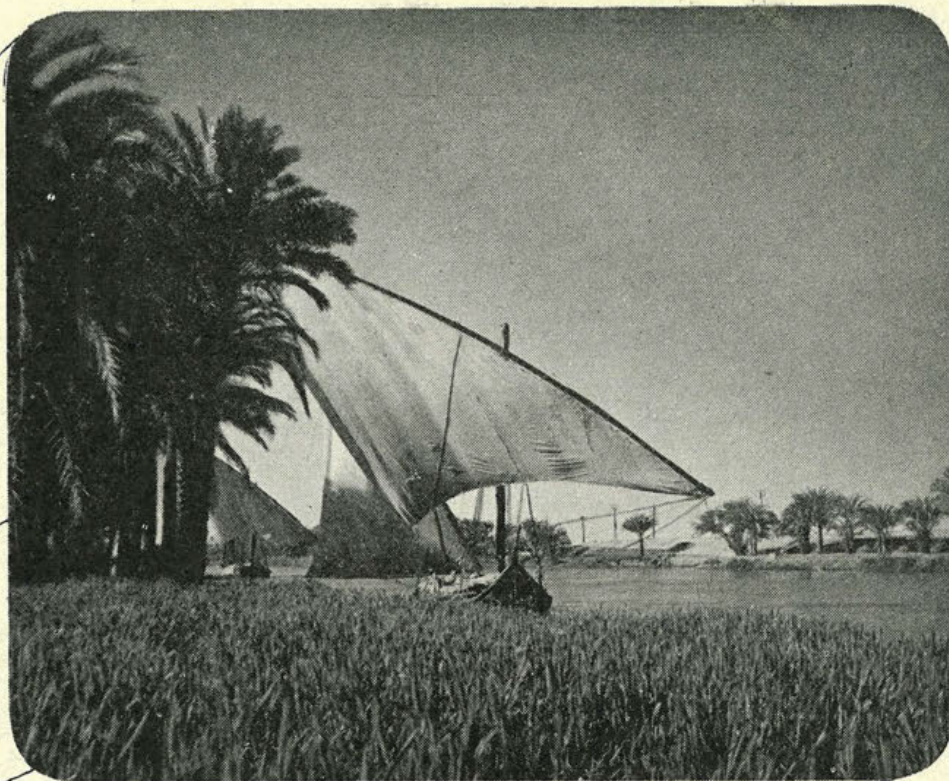
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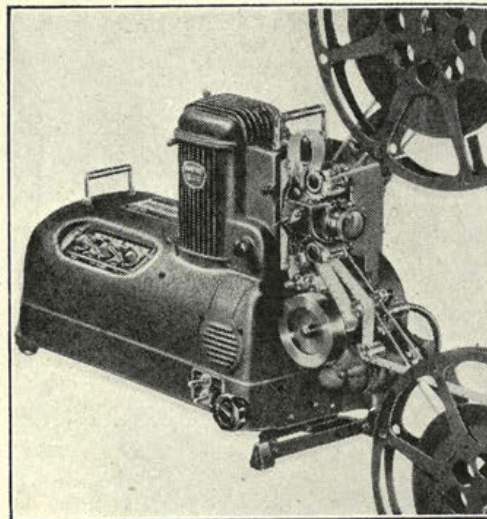
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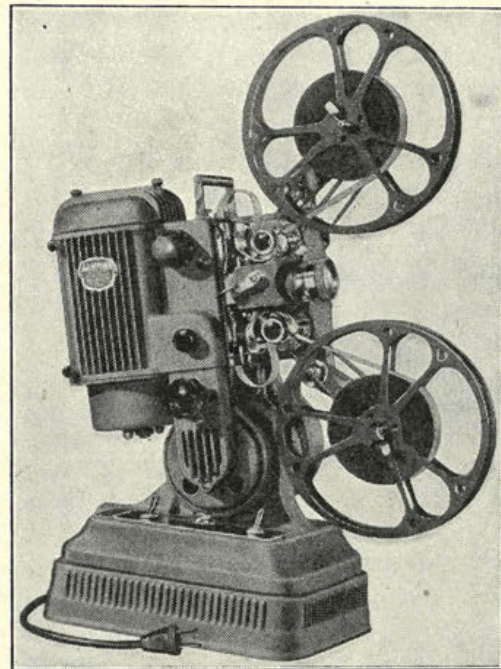
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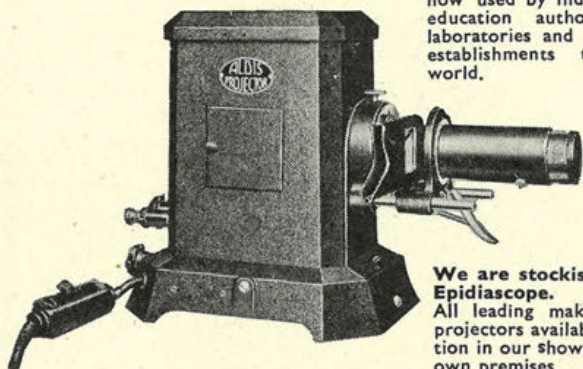
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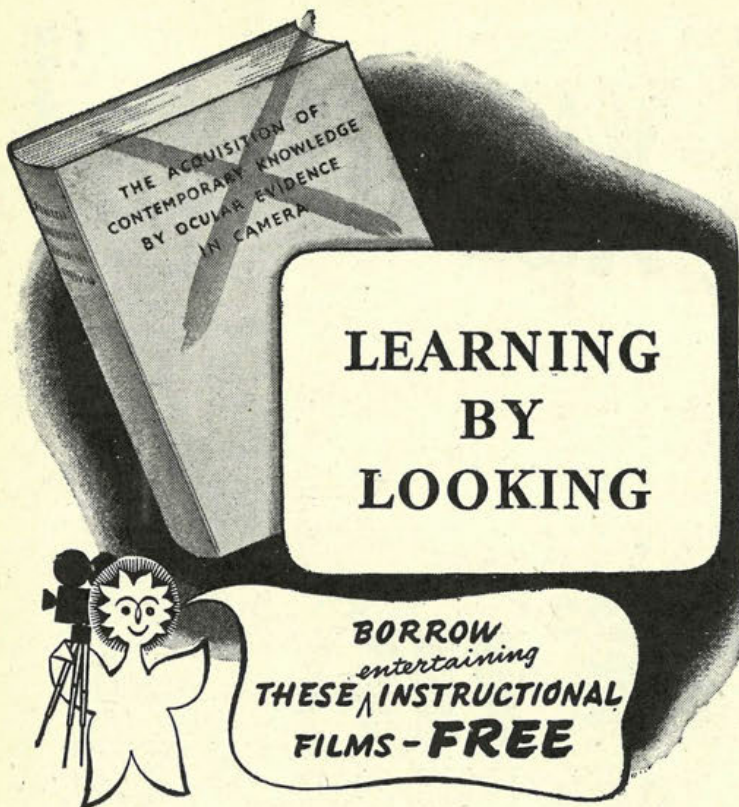
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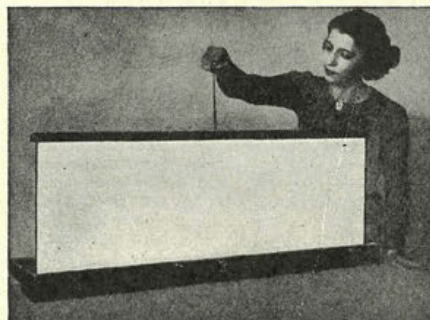
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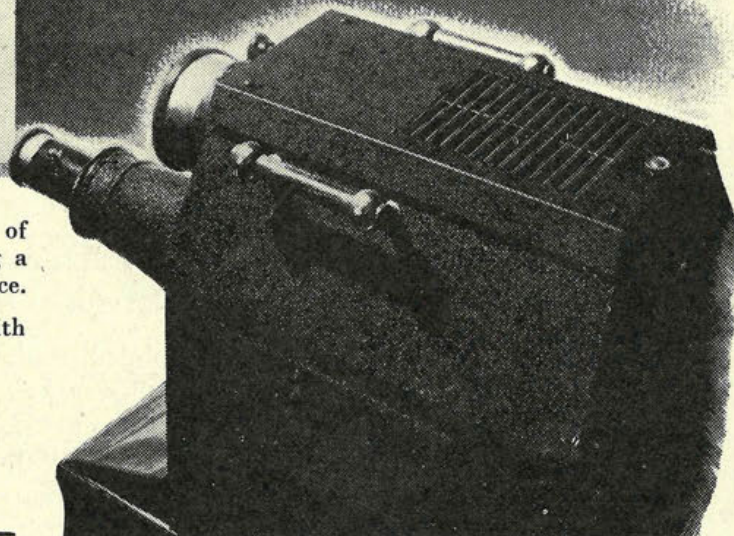
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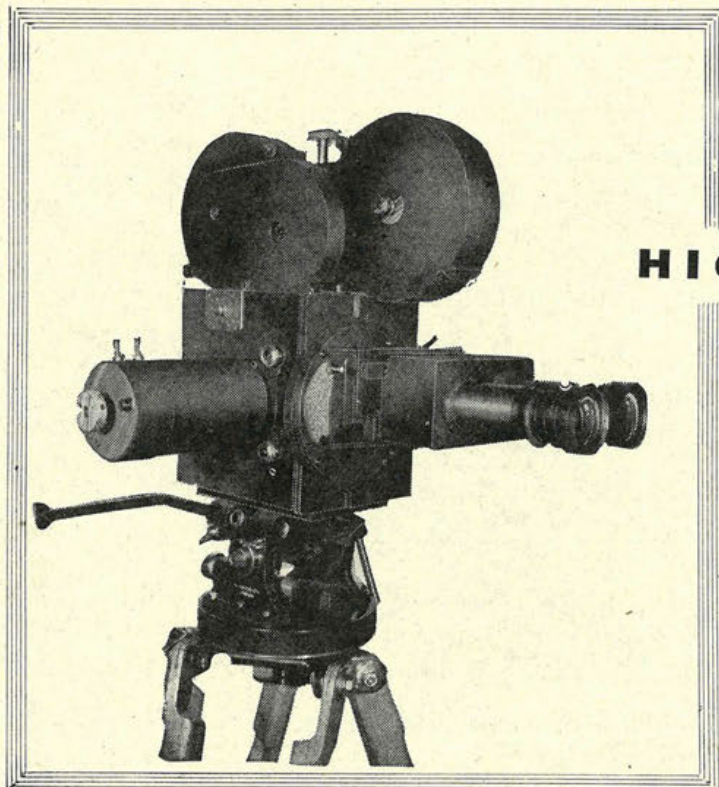


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CONTENTS

THE STILL, SMALL VOICE: by D. A. Yerrill	45	MONSIEUR VERDOUX: by John H. Winge	69
YUGOSLAV FILMS: by Marie Seton	47	CRITICISM AND OPINION: by Kenneth L. Thompson	71
REPORT FROM LATIN AMERICA: by Peter Plaskitt	49	RECENT AMERICAN FILM WRITING: by Harold Leonard	73
NEWS FROM IRELAND: by Patricia Hutchins	50	BRITISH FILMS OF THE QUARTER: by Arthur Vesselo	76
THE HUNGARIAN FILM: by George Sinetar	52	SOME NOTES FROM RUSSIA: by Oleg Leonidov	77
RELIGION IN FILMS VERSUS RELIGIOUS FILMS: by the Rev. Brian Hession	53	THE FILM AND HUMANITY: Book reviews by Herman G. Weinberg	78
FESTIVAL IN EDINBURGH	57	THE CONCEPT OF A VISUAL UNIT: by D. George Bennell	80
YOU MAKE YOUR MOVIES: by Arthur Roseheimer, Jnr.	58	THE GERMAN FILM INSTITUTE: by G. Buckland Smith	83
JEAN GRÉMILLON: by Hazel Hackett	60	GOING TO THE CINEMA: Book review by Mary Field	85
REVOLUTION OR RETROGRESSION: by Hans Keller	63	A NOTE FROM POLAND	87
IN SEARCH OF FILMS: by Iris Barry	65		
MOVIE ACTING: by Thomas Quinn Curtis	68		

COVER STILL: *La Coupole de St. Pierre (Universal, Italy)*

TO READERS

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THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

By

D. A. YERRILL

THAT NOTORIETY AND POPULARITY are economically equally valuable, the film of *Caesar and Cleopatra* conclusively proved. That either is permanently valuable, either to art or to humanity, is open to question. Whether a film is to be judged as a popular or an economic proposition, or as a work of art—in fact, on a scale of popular, economic or permanent values—is open to a question that should be asked in a loud voice, insistently, often, and without fear.

Mr. James Agate stated that he judged a film on its success or failure in doing what it sets out to do. The question has been begged for those who believe that it is the initial setting out that is the point at which to judge. And if, as may justifiably, if cynically, be supposed, the majority of films set out to make money for their promoters, where is our criterion then? This small voice, however, is not

raised in condemnation of the Mammonite contributors to the "Motion Picture Herald"; they have doubtless achieved their Nirvana and are beyond recall. Those who bow their heads to Mammon show their bottoms to the world; it is enough, we are well used to the repulsive sight.

Inasmuch as the cinema now fulfils the functions once performed by more pedestrian art forms, it is an art. Another name could probably be found for it, but in the end we shall be obliged, *faute de mieux* to dub it "art". For the film stimulates as once a tragedy stimulated; the film, as did once a metaphysical poem, can give rise to conjecture and even to deep thought; and films influence, influence more strongly and widely than all the other art forms put together. How does a city typist or a suburban shopgirl know the ways of life of the Americans or the

French but through their films? How do we know societies which are not our own but through moving photographs written about them by the supersocial, nonsectarian, omniscient artist? (The novel and the play are comparatively minor sources of information.) The pertinent question at this point is, "How far is this influence valuable?"

In England, it is suggested, not at all.

An imaginary Gallup poll to discover the main contributors to the decline of our civilisation would probably reveal that Lack of Faith, Lack of Understanding and Lack of Taste hold pride of place. Almost completely overlooked would be that omnipresent bugaboo, Lack of Humanity. Do without a thing long enough, and it ceases to be recognised as a lack; suffer a thing long enough, and it ceases to hurt. In fact, at first sight, it is difficult to realise just how bad a film was *Odd Man Out*.

What has happened to the friendly humanity of Chaucer and Shakespeare? to the uninhibited zest of Jonson and Smollett? to the kindness and generosity of Fielding, Lamb, and Walton? How much more stimulating and designed to promote the best in men was the conversation provoked in the coffee-houses, the taverns, and over the garden-fences of our ancestors of two, three, four and five centuries ago! A great deal of it was conversation about art just as much of that which passes in the "tubes", the bars and the offices of to-day. But what do our artists give us to talk about? The nation has forgotten humanity; the light has gone from their eyes; they are far, far too smart. Wit, in the widest sense of the word, has come down to us, in a greatly emaciated form, as a heritage from the constructive dialectics and the bracing and minute observation of the tradition that began with Donne and ended with Pope. To-day, in an age of balletomania, symbolism, impressionism and apocalyptic surrealisme we must accept the part for the whole. Art is now a matter of innuendo, of nuance, it is no longer quite nice to say what we mean.

There was no laughter and there were no tears in *Odd Man Out*, any more than the Irish any longer know laughter or tears. The film was, at best, an apparently intimate cross-section of the lives and hopes of members of a decadent race and may serve as a grim warning to the members of a semi-decadent one. Against a background of a shambling plot, bristling with irrelevant incident and character, was enacted the febrile drama of lost causes and shattered myths, the jangling and feeble gesticulations of the dried-up skeletons of once-human beings. The film's claim to fame was the prettiness of the playing, with a possible minor claim in the symphonic touches of the photography—done so much more effectively in *Hets*, *Farrebique*, and *Vredens Dag*.

The effect of such a film is inevitable; its success assured. The well-informed recognise it for great art for it ties in with their conceptions of great art nurtured by the ballet, Noel Coward, and whoever it was that produced "Antony and Cleopatra" at the Piccadilly Theatre. The not-so-well-informed believe that it is great art because the critics and the well-informed say so. Somebody's yardstick is out of kilter. Nobody any longer asks, "Did it make me feel alive? did it make me feel anybody in it was alive? had lived? will live? did it make me feel that there was anything in life except for a universal desire to escape from it, if only for 90 minutes?" Nobody wants to know if the plot is integrated; if the characters contribute to plot and the plot to character; if emotions are genuine either in the

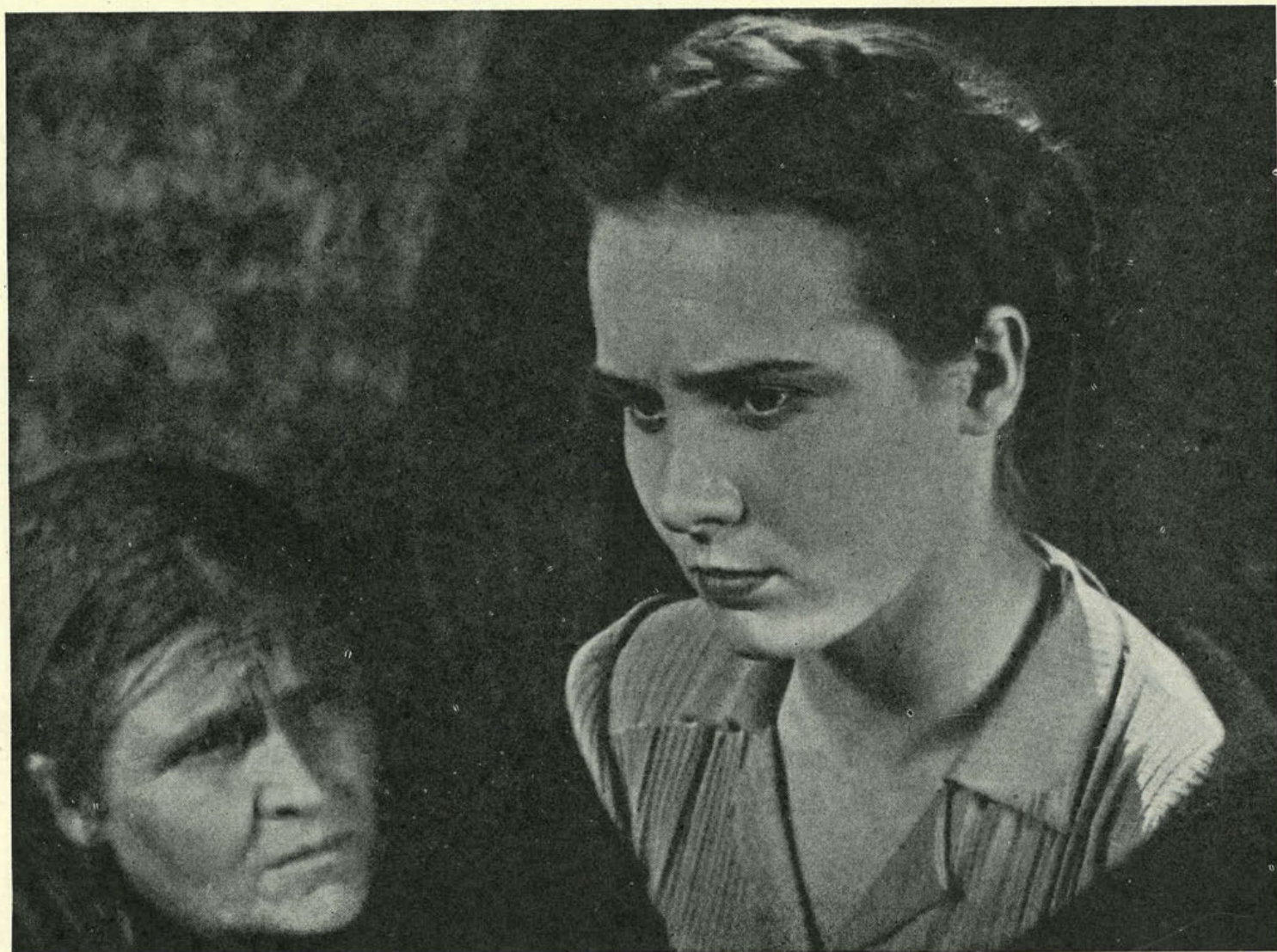
piece or occasioned in the audience by the piece. The fact that art is at the same time larger and smaller than life is forgotten to the extent that cinematographic art begins to bear no relation to life at all.

The bulk of American films, so rightly sneered at or ignored by West End audiences for their drooling sentimentality and unashamed commercialism, have this advantage over the bulk of contemporary English pieces, that the Americans have not, as yet, lost sight of Humanity. And by this is meant that an American film does not run away from emotion, does not sacrifice life to "art" by strained innuendo and clever, clever camera-work. This is not to say that American films, many of them, are not slick, smart, tricky and disgusting. Neither is it to say that American films have those of British studios over a barrel. But it is to say that even from a mediocre film like *Sea of Grass* the industry in Britain can learn a lesson. The mention of Art for Art's Sake will produce in the readers of this journal the feeling of revulsion I would introduce at this point, and it is scarcely necessary to mention *The Ivory Tower* and *The Yellow Book* to develop revulsion into nausea. The part object of this essay is to make the stream of association include films of the genre of *Odd Man Out*.

The choice is *not* between sentimentalism and realism; it is not between naturalism and symbolism or between impressionism and over-protestation. In so far as it is a choice at all, it is between good and bad, between progress and retrogression. Some conception of the grave consequences inherent in the state of the British cinema at the moment may be derived from some remarks of Aldous Huxley: "We tend to think in terms of the art we like; and if the art we like is bad, then our thinking and feeling will be bad. And if the thinking and feeling of most of the individuals composing a society is bad, is not that society in danger?" It is in danger, serious danger. How serious may be judged after a glance at the faces of the queue of young women waiting to get into the Palais de Danse on Saturday night.

The only ism that has been introduced to an appreciable extent into chit-chat about the cinema is "commercialism", usually qualified by "vulgar" (apparently it comes on two levels, "Surely this gifted pair of directors (Powell and Pressburger) thinks always on two disconnected levels; those of popular appeal and technical refinement".—William Whitebait). The arty boys have so far confined their activities to the productions of the French and Russian cinemas, with a faint bleat about cashing-in on Shakespeare. The cinema may think itself fortunate that its name is not bandied back and forth with those of Sartre, Connolly, Lady Gregory and Dylan Thomas. But it may think itself unfortunate that no one, with the exception of Mr. Roger Manvell, has seen fit to publish a book about it for the mass of the public whose opinion, totalled, should be the criterion for good taste; that virtually nobody talks of directors rather than of players; that hardly anybody goes to see a film in the frame of mind that he visits a play.

Now is the time to ask "Why is this?", and to keep on asking "Why?" in louder and more concerted voices until the men who make films in England remember that *all beauty is functional*; and that the film is above imitation, has outgrown slavish ties to the stage and the novel, wants an injection of simple humanity, needs an inoculation against Art for Box Office's Sake and Attrition for Art's Sake.



Slavitzka

The First Yugoslav Feature Film

YUGOSLAV FILMS—THE FIRST TWO YEARS

By

MARIE SETON

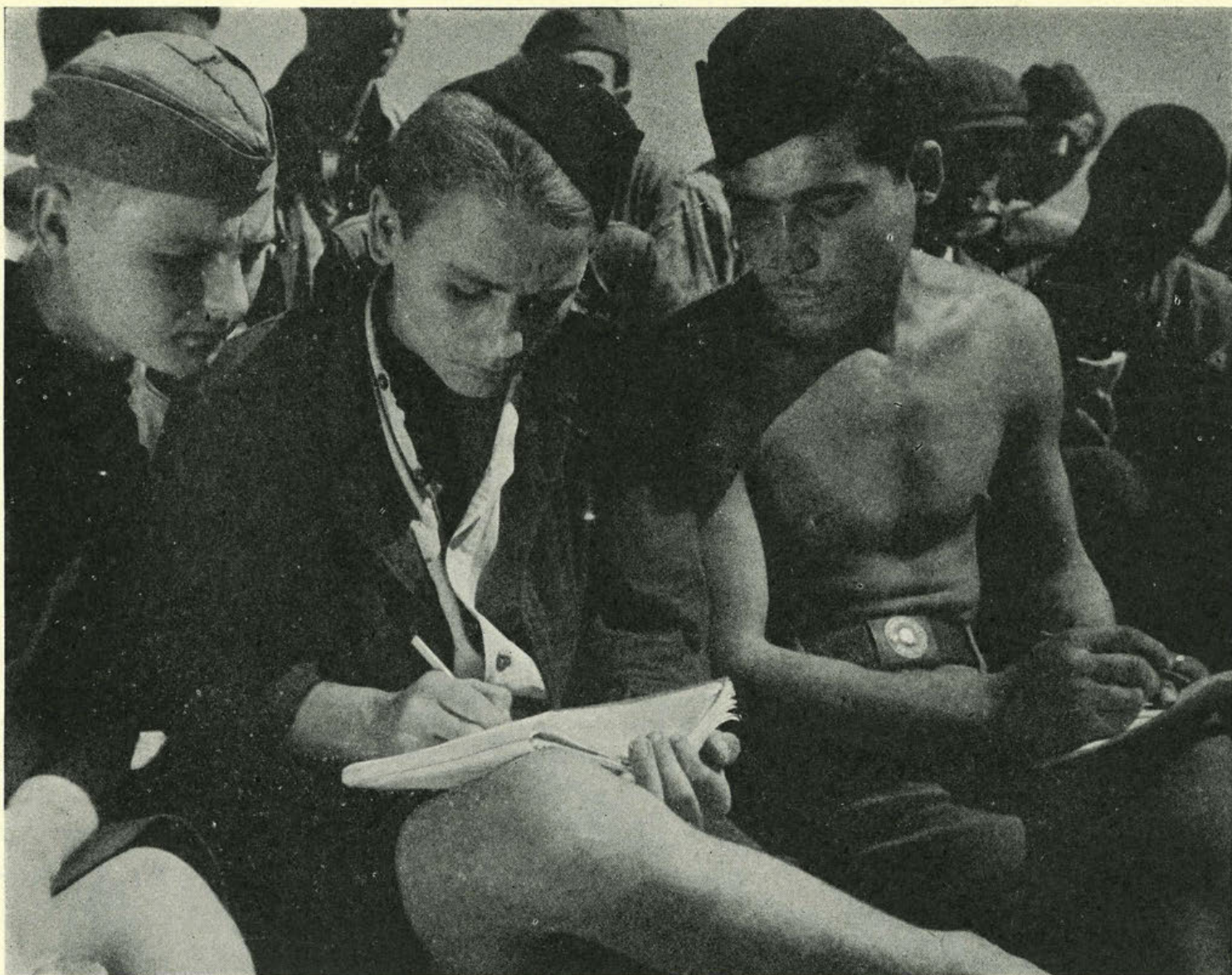
ONE OF THE STRIKING RESULTS of war and the subsequent nationalization programme of Yugoslavia is the rapid development of a film industry. Before the war no films were produced and, therefore, those Yugoslavs who sought to work in one or another branch of film production were obliged to go abroad to France, Germany or Czechoslovakia.

The reasons for the lack of a pre-war film industry were two-fold: First, the virtual monopoly which Hollywood film companies had secured and maintained in Yugoslavia and, secondly, a general disinterest on the part of potential investors who realized that at that time Yugoslav films would have but a small audience outside their native land, which in any case, was then meagrely equipped with cinemas. It therefore took a change of system to conquer the American monopoly and to make a concerted effort to develop national films.

It is well known that all leftward governments take an interest in the national arts and mediums of communication because of their informative and educational value. Hence, it is not at all surprising to find that the Yugoslav Government set up a Committee of Cinematography immediately following the War of Liberation. This committee is an independent organization directly responsible to the state for its work and not, as in the case of the other arts, under the direction of the Committee for Culture and Art.

The president of the committee is Mr. Vucá. Working under him are subheads for production units producing feature films, documentary films and newsreels. There is also a Foreign Department headed by Mirko Lukavatz which imports, and will in the future export, films.

The Committee of Cinematography can be said to have grown from nothing, or certainly from very little, since few



Omladinska Pruga (Route Railway)

Yugoslav Documentary

of the technicians now employed in it had more than a few months' experience in foreign studios. However, having to learn as it goes along, the committee has nevertheless produced to date some thirty newsreels and documentaries as well as a feature film, *Slavitza*, which was first shown in Belgrade on May 12th. On the immediate agenda are three other feature films which are already in production.

The documentary films at the present time deal with contemporary subjects, for example, redistribution of land to the poorest Bosnian peasants is the theme of *New Earth*; while a three-reel picture deals with the building of the Youth Railway near Sarajevo, this railway, as others now in the process of construction, being constructed entirely through the voluntary work of 62,000 young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. A third film is a documented account of the Mikhailovitch Trial. Other documentaries include an excellent athletic film and a one-reel picture on Marshal Tito.

In each case these films, although closely related to reportage, are lifted out of the category by the excellence of the sound and the imaginative use of music. Indeed the composer Popadarlopo is doing an enormous service to the young Yugoslav cinema.

The first feature film, *Slavitza*, is also memorable because of the sound track and certain individual sequences which are both moving and powerful in conception and execution; for example, the shooting of hostages, the truthfulness of which it is impossible to doubt. Other episodes, however, are over-theatrical and these episodes were severely criticized in the Belgrade press on account of their exaggeration; for instance, the characterization of the collaborators failed to ring true and was condemned as crude.

The scope of *Slavitza* is extremely ambitious for a first film. Set in a seaport town of Dalmatia, it tells the story of a group of young fishermen and the girl Slavitzka from the time of the Italian and German invasion to the victory celebration. The story develops as the group individually resists collaboration with the Germans; with increased brutality on the part of the Germans affecting each and all of them, they join the Partisans, following which their various exploits are shown.

The first half of the film has much more cohesion than the second, which is destroyed by the building of too many climaxes so that with each climax one expects the film to end. The exploits themselves do not appear forced, at least, not to anyone who has been in Yugoslavia and heard even a few personal reminiscences.

Probably the most important reaction to *Slavitzka* in Yugoslavia was the criticism it called forth. It was severely criticized in spite of its good points. The main criticism was that on the whole the film was too crude an interpretation. One comment in the newspaper "Glas", organ of the Youth Movement, was that people don't talk that way, meaning, of course, that in moments of crisis people do not state their views and feelings with such precision as in the dialogue of *Slavitzka*.

On the second day that the film played in Belgrade long lines of school children were taken by their teachers to see

it. This is indicative of the concentrated effort which is now being made to make films an integral part of Yugoslavia's new daily life. Naturally part of this effort is the building of new cinemas and an allocation of money for the purchase of foreign films of which there are at present an inadequate supply. (In May, 1947, there were only about twelve foreign films in circulation.) This programme of purchase includes a considerable number of teaching films, the best available entertainment films and those film classics which have something to teach both audience and film technicians the art and techniques of cinematography.

REPORT FROM LATIN AMERICA

By

PETER PLASKITT

FIVE THOUSAND MILES away in Rio, in Buenos Aires, Santiago and Lima, British films are being seen by Latin American audiences in many cases for the first time.

Ten years ago the number of British films which were sent to South America was, compared to the Hollywood productions, practically insignificant. When a British feature film was shown few of the people who saw it realised that it was in fact British. Considering the average standard of many of the pre-1939 productions, this was possibly just as well. British Documentaries have always been appreciated by the few people who saw them.

The war brought a decisive and abrupt end to this trickle of British films into the luxurious South American cinemas; but the Hollywood products still flowed and when the war drew to a close, the Americans, possibly fearful of British competition, redoubled their efforts to maintain their hold and to secure fresh markets for their films. To begin with, Britain sent some of her pictures with war-time themes to South America. First-class films which had been warmly received in this country, like the *True Glory* and *Desert Victory*, met with an indifferent reception in Rio and Buenos Aires. This was perhaps to be expected from a continent which had not been ravaged by war. Then films like *The Man in Grey*, *The Wicked Lady* and *The Seventh Veil* started to arrive. In a very short time James Mason was almost as well known as President Peron. Any film, good or bad, starring any of the trio James Mason, Margaret Lockwood or Phyllis Calvert was assured of success.

Early this year *The Seventh Veil* and *The Wicked Lady* were two of the most discussed pictures in the whole South American continent, though there were still some people who were convinced that both were American films and that James Mason was a Hollywood star.

Today, the films which are most popular are those with a South American atmosphere. So Hitchcock's *Notorious* which was staged partly in Rio was certain of success. Musicals, particularly if they show Mexican or Latin American night-life, and however phoney they might be, are always appreciated.

One problem which confronted British and American producers with an eye to the South American market was the language question. This problem has been solved in two ways: (1) by dubbing and (2) with subtitles. M.G.M. are now the only company who still dub their films in Spanish,

and it is a very curious experience to see tough American types mouthing "thank you" and hearing "muchas gracias" on the sound track. However, after sitting through a performance of *Schools for Syrens* (M.G.M. with Esther Williams) and noticing the obvious enjoyment of the Chilean audience, we began to think that perhaps there was something to be said for dubbing after all.

It is true that M.G.M. organise their dubbing scientifically and use trained artists for the work; thus the effect produced is more satisfactory than, for example, with many English dubbed Russian films that we have seen here. All the other English speaking films are subtitled.

Second to American films, Mexican are quite the most popular. At this moment there is a Mexican director in Santiago de Chile who is making a musical film with Chilean technicians and a Mexican star.

The Chilean film studios are well laid out, and supplied with the latest equipment of all types. As yet, though, they haven't produced any films of great significance. We were able to see two documentary films they had made, one about coal and the other on the mining of nitrates. Both films were commercially sponsored and had been made for prestige rather than for direct advertising purposes. They both suffered from the same faults: poor, indecisive direction and uneven camera work. However, these are some of the first documentaries Chile has produced, and they are certainly good early attempts. Their feature films have not, as yet, established a reputation of outstanding originality.*

The centre of gravity of film production in South America is probably Buenos Aires, and Argentine films are beginning to rival Mexican productions for popularity in some countries. They are very proud of their own stars and technicians who, until recently, were trained and organised by Hollywood technicians. They are now less under the American influence though its effect may be seen in their films, which tend to imitate the American productions.

It seems that there is no real future for South American films, until they get away from the futile task of trying to copy American methods. When that day comes we may expect to see something great, but until then it seems unlikely that their films will soar far North of the equator.

* See "The Cinema in Chile", by Raymond del Castello. Sight and Sound No. 60, winter 1946-47.

NEWS FROM IRELAND

By

PATRICIA HUTCHINS

THE MEAL IS NOT as good as usual in the hotel. A domestic science instructress in bright green Weldon's-pattern jersey, the young man on timber business and ourselves, find the potatoes watery and the prunes half-cooked. Nelly says its these *filum* people, ordering ham and eggs for eight, on a *fast day* as well. Talk seeps in through the frog's spawn glass of a window into the bar, where a long story of the making or breaking of a contract is in progress.

"I told him straight—" a London voice declares, "not that I want to make trouble, the very last thing. 'Jack, m'boy, I want to be frank with you . . .'" Murmur of approval. "'No', I said, 'I made up my mind—'" Another voice cuts across, "Hand us that new lens a minute".

O'Shea, the driver of the largest car in the hotel garage, is taking the party out later.

"A lot they'll see but the woods that are all cut down, like an old hairbrush that's wore away", said a local man, who had no use for talk of all the money that would be going to extras "just for dressing up". People remembered how an American unit had visited a neighbouring town for backgrounds to a stage-Irish affair, some years before the war.

So far there have been few films arising directly from the material of Irish life, past and contemporary. Sequences of *Henry V* and part of *I See a Dark Stranger* were instances of how Ireland has been used, for various practical reasons, as a place where bits and pieces of a film can be shot—and its makers enjoy a change from austerity. *Odd Man Out*, taken from a novel by an Englishman resident in Belfast, reflects the influence of the French cinema as it has been adapted and used by the British film industry. The documentary element, on a far higher level than the surrealist, Citizen Kane-ism of certain sections, conveyed so well the voices of children and grown-ups, the cindery coke-and-smoke smell, that tram-clanging, cobble-street atmosphere of industrial Belfast.

All the same, we have yet to see a film with the validity of *The Informer*, played by Irish actors and actresses this time. It seems that the rights of O'Flaherty's *Famine* and Sean O'Casey's *Shadow of a Gunman* have been acquired by one of the Rank organisations. *Esther Waters*, from the novel by George Moore, and *Paddy the Cope*, based on a co-operative enterprise here, are also for the screen.

For some years now the evils-of-the-cinema theme has given place to demands for a "native film industry". It has been optimistically suggested that good features might be made for £10,000 to £20,000, and there has been talk of a quota system to protect Irish productions. Whereas the more high-flown schemes are unlikely to come to anything, without considerable assistance from abroad and the guarantee of markets elsewhere, the documentary and educational short are now being seriously considered.

A Nation Once Again was shown as part of the Thomas Davis centenary celebrations. Made by Gaumont British (with Irish cameraman and scriptwriter) for the Irish Film Institute and partly government sponsored, it summarised

various aspects of the patriot's life and dealt with Ireland to-day. In spite of a rather March of Time approach, and the usual finale of flags, clouds and aeroplanes flying over, it had a certain G.B. slickness, a professional gloss which had not been achieved here previously.

Paul Rotha, lecturing and broadcasting here last winter, brought the question of documentary into clearer outline. We desperately need education in scientific method in an agricultural country where production figures per head and standards of living are often pitifully low. Rural electrification is on its way and already advance publicity vans are showing films for demonstration purposes. Rumours continue to float around that semi-state and government departments are planning to make films through the Irish Film Institute.

There are one or two companies in operation whose present activities, chiefly news reel and technical films for special showing, are preparatory for such development. *Hibernia Pictures Ltd.* deal with news items for the major companies, and have, I understand, some five shorts on hand. One of these *Davitt Remembered*, made for 20th Century Fox, will be released shortly. It is based on events in the Land League days as re-enacted recently by local talent, and recorded by the film. *Cino Teoranta*, a company formed to produce commercially on 16 mm. has recently commenced activities, and details will be available later.

Lack of processing facilities has considerably hindered work here and the formation of a company to supply the needs of home and visiting units has been announced. The Irish Tourist Association, Pan-American Airways and other bodies interested in tourist traffic, have made short films and there are likely to be a number more for export.

For a number of years the Irish Film Society had been the only manifestation of a serious preoccupation with the cinema, apart from one or two individuals who had advocated state action. In addition to the showing of good features and shorts, the formation of a children's film committee, and a yearly film school for teachers, a production unit has been organised. In the latter case instructors were often only one chapter ahead of the pupils but events have since shown that their energy and initiative were well expended. The films which emerged were intended more as samplers than masterpieces and several of their makers have become professionals. A number of affiliated societies have been formed in the country towns, and one of the most lively of these is at Portlaoighise. There the usual functions of the film society has been extended to the organising of programmes in co-operation with the Young Farmer's Clubs, various colleges and schools. It is interesting to note that farmers find many of the English films have little practical value as they demonstrate too high a proportion of mechanised methods and deal with larger farms. In common with most of the other branches, 16 mm. will be used next season for all activities as a means of overcoming accommodation difficulties and reducing expenditure.



Davitt Remembered

The Irish Film Institute, founded in 1945, and receiving a small grant, sets out to 'acquire, promote, produce and distribute films of educational, cultural, and recreational value with particular reference to the principles laid down in the Encyclical, *Vigilanti Cura*'. The library is to include a wide variety of films, 'many of which are informative but of absorbing interest, and most of which could hold their own in *entertainment value* with the star-spangled, much publicised commercial productions'.

The General Council of Irish Bishops have given their sanction and approval to the Institute and branches have been formed in several provincial centres. Distribution for films is found among universities, schools, colleges, the Red Cross, County Committees of Agriculture and the libraries. Demonstrations are available for teachers, a mobile unit has recently been acquired and a monthly publication summarises activities.

Across the same street, as another symbol of the growing use of the cinema here, is Sight and Sound House, new-painted and shiny. There are projectors and microphones and generators on sale, with M.G.M. features, British and Canadian documentaries and other films available. More than one organisation has tried to build up 16 mm. circuits throughout the country districts but various difficulties arose—finding suitable halls, heating them during the winter, the vagaries of the weather, and, above all, the fact that town and rural taste is something quite different.

In Kerry some went out for a drink while a feature was in full swing, cheerfully missing twenty minutes or so, for

they regarded it as a series of images rather than a connected story. After all, films have developed a number of conventions, or contractions, to borrow a word from shorthand theory, which we accept now as easily as the alphabet. Another countryman is supposed to have declared, "I don't know what you'd want watching them men walking on the wall".

Until an investigation has been carried out and experiments tried in a number of different areas, and perhaps a study made of experience gained in other countries, it is unlikely that for some time the small travelling theatrical shows will be faced with serious rivals. The present tendency is for some enterprising trader on the spot to buy equipment, rent the films and show them in harmony with fair-days, the weather—and local feeling.

Meanwhile the capital becomes more film-aware day by day. The journalist is looked at a little nervously as the various concerns proposing to work in Ireland get ready for the fray. Reports have appeared in the press which it has not been possible to expand or wholly confirm. Gabriel Pascal is said to be forming a company and to have purchased a castle as a base. Frank Dermody, Abbey Theatre producer, may go abroad to study methods before helping to direct productions here. An Irish Company, Mercury Films Ltd., with Gormanstown Castle as headquarters, was given headlines some months ago but no further statement has been issued. Here and there one is told mysteriously, "Oh there's a great deal going on . . . in another month or two . . . a great deal behind the scenes".

Thus over the past seven years, as in England over a previous decade, there has been this slow penetration into the general consciousness of how the cinema might be used in Ireland. Her best interests are, of course, a matter of widely divergent opinion, for society here, as everywhere, is made up of a series of tensions; every minor development being an expression of attitude. So far, that sense of individuality and that depiction of place, the air that surrounds it, bubble-like and complete, which has given greatness to Irish letters and the stage, has not yet had a chance of reaching the cinema.

In an article in the April number of *Life and Letters*, Robert Herring, in analysing *Symphonie Pastorale* and *Les Enfants du Paradis*, makes an interesting reflection on the influence of the 'old Caligari set of death wishes', still found in modern French films—'an inner death, seeking to persuade itself life is rotten so as to throw it away'.

The last sequence of *Les Enfants* shows the central figure lost in the whirling impersonal crowd, separated by confusion and stupidity and destruction of peace from the image of beauty—or so I saw it. There, in the acceptance of a kind of death, is a protest, a cry for life.

In Ireland, too, there have been those who turned to *Caligari* as the Koran of the cinema, perhaps as part of that discontent voiced by writers and playwrights against the inadequacy, the flatness of a post revolutionary period. Ireland has absorbed into her own pattern of outlook many invaders, and it is likely that Irish films, whatever their financial or technical origin, will convey, in their own terms, something of that conflict between despair and optimism which seems to be working itself out here, as elsewhere in Europe.

THE HUNGARIAN FILM

By

GEORGE SINETAR

HUNGARY ENTERED THE EUROPEAN film market in 1931 with a film called *Myppolit the Lackey*, a rather frothy little comedy, but all the same, it had considerable influence on future developments. It was a great success in Budapest, and for years afterwards almost all Hungarian producers were clamouring for the services of the man who had written the script for their own films. His name was Karl Noti. The director was Istvan Szekeley. The male star Pal Gavor, supported by that fine character actor Gyula Kabos.

It was, as I say, an insignificant affair without any lasting value, but as a result of its success lots of people were anxious to invest money in Hungarian films, and so it happened that in the country's two studios, between 1931 and 1944, nearly five hundred films were produced. From both the national and international point of view these films were frankly bad. There was no real attempt to develop a style; box office was the only criterion. The scripts were based on silly puns, mechanical plots that creaked in every joint and every trite dodge of exposing film known to the trade.

In 1936, Budapest had its first view of a really good French film. This had a quite revolutionary effect on native producers and audiences alike. The same bad old films were still turned out; but now, instead of making money, they were flops. The audience was no longer satisfied to hear an artless mixture of Hungarian chatter and songs. They demanded artistic Hungarian films. So, very slowly, French influence began to be seen in the work of Hungarian producers, directors and actors alike. And it was now that a few films were actually produced which showed that there was some hope, artistically speaking, for the industry. Representative of these were *Anniversary*, *Man Under the Bridge*, *The Sun Shines*, *Deathly Spring*. These productions unquestionably showed that, given a fair chance, Hungarian films could be made to compare favourably with those of other nations.

GERMAN INFLUENCE

But, unfortunately, in 1939, the German studios, turning out efficient Nazi propaganda, were already stifling this development. It was part of Doctor Goebbels' policy to suppress the artistic advancement of small nations. By 1944, whatever the Hungarian cinema had achieved was in ruins. The best practitioners had either emigrated or retired. The Reichmark had entirely driven the French films with their healthy influence out of the country and the market was flooded with pictures glorifying Nazi heroics, all of them quite alien from the Hungarian spirit and, of course, concerned only with "putting over" the Fascist ideology and the lies of race purity. The transition was slowly and carefully arranged. In 1941 films about

simple peasants were shown, the idea being to equate Hungarian national sentiment with the soil; then came films about soldiers, about self sacrifice, blind heroism, and, above all, German imperialist ideals and their nobility. Thus Hungarian film art became the slave of Nazi propaganda. It was this period that saw *The Changing of the Guard*, *The Thirtieth*, *The First One*, *The Blameless*, *Dr. Istvan Kovacs* and so on, all 100 per cent. Fascist films. The roles were played by the infamous Antal Pager, Ference Kiss and the bloody-handed Laszlo Szilassy, and one of the leading Hungarian actresses, Zita Szelezay took leading parts. Naturally, all these films advocated anti-Semitism and the right of the "chosen few" to rule. Instigation to murder and blind racial hatred combined with false pathos and morality were screamed from every inch of these productions.

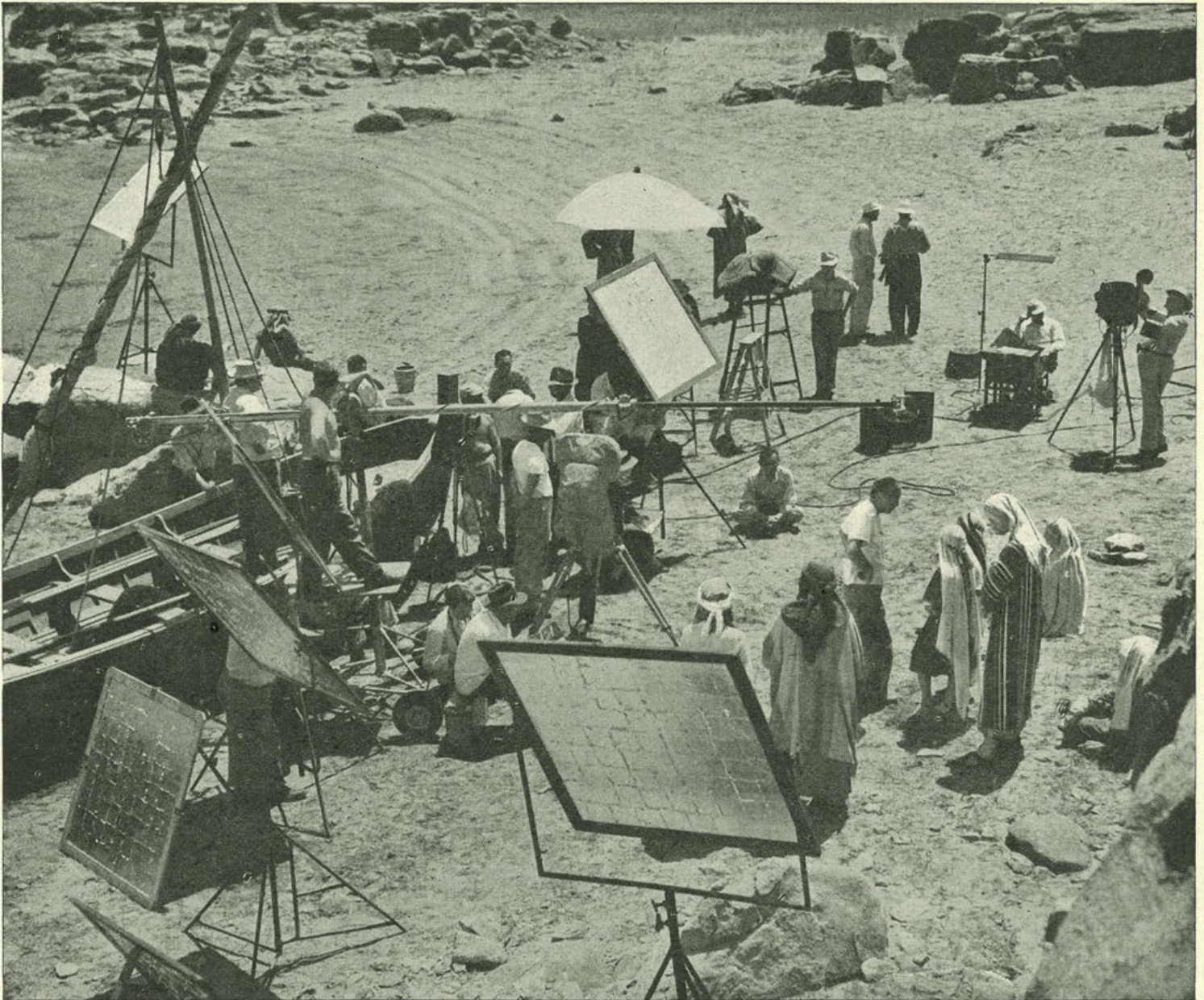
COURAGE AND THE FUTURE

Strangely enough, it was when Hungary was completely over-run that a film of merit and courage was produced. It was called *Madach*, the life story of the writer, Imre Madach, who wrote the world-famous play, "The Tragedy of Man". The film was made by Dr. Antal Neth, who was at that time the Director of the Hungarian National Theatre. It was a work that was true to the principles of true film art and Christian morality alike, a most welcome oasis in the seemingly limitless desert of propaganda.

In the autumn of 1944, the Russian guns sounded louder than the sirens of the Budapest factories, and thus Hungarian film production collapsed beneath a rain of bombs and granite, but the power of the spirit can overcome even the power of destruction, and now Hungarian film production took on a new lease of life.

In the summer of 1945, Hungarian film production started again and, by the spring of 1946, three new films had been finished: *The Teacher*, *The Gold Watch* and *Without Lies*, and there have also been a few cartoons. It would be wrong to say that these productions indicate that these films have outgrown the films of the past. As far as theme is concerned, we have the joys of freedom and the brotherhood of man, but somehow all this good will is rather obscurely expressed, precisely because nobody seems quite sure what is meant by true freedom and democracy.

The Hungarian artist is still a stranger to freedom of thought. After a quarter of a century of mutilation of ideals the wounds are healing slowly, but there is enough in past performance to nourish modest hopes that one day Hungarian films will develop a stature that will enable them to be judged beside those of the Western nations.



Production Unit "Jairus' Daughter"

RELIGION IN FILMS VERSUS RELIGIOUS FILMS

By

THE REV. BRIAN HESSION

IN CHOOSING THIS TITLE I wish to project into everyone's mind that religion in relation to films falls into two distinct categories. One is governed by the magic word "Box Office" and the other by the spiritual drive of convinced Christians for propaganda purposes. The very word propaganda may have an unsavoury taste to some, but let us use it in its highest sense. Everything which is portrayed graphically before the minds of people really falls under the heading of propaganda. This is particularly true of motion pictures, for there never was a greater medium for inculcating ideas. The public cinema is the greatest dictator of our day, even more than television can

ever hope to be. Millions of people, week after week, pay their money to sit for two hours or more without the power to switch it off and without the courage to walk out. There they sit in the darkness next to their girl friend in the most electric atmosphere possible. The illusion of the film is helped by beautiful curtains and coloured lights and the screen proceeds to dictate to them the way of life which it is portraying at that moment. It does this by the subtle combination, carefully calculated, of sight, movement, speech, music and insinuation. There are very few people, comparatively, who allow themselves to develop their critical faculty towards what they are seeing. To use a colloquialism, "they just sit there and soak it in".

During my visit and two months' stay in Hollywood, I learned a great deal of the political and religious lobbying that goes on behind Hollywood. I think that the press conference which was put on for me by the Motion Picture Producers' Association of America and the weekly broadcasts were arranged in order that Hollywood should hear something of the reactions of others to their products along spiritual, philosophical and religious lines. When we use the word Hollywood we should not think of that tawdry "has been" suburb of Los Angeles, but of the concentration in one very wide area of the American film industry. It has been through its growing pains locally of being vulgar, noisy and cheap. These attributes to-day do not altogether apply to the film industry but more to the mass of humanity which has flocked to Southern California to ape their idea of how a glamorous film star should live. We would be making a great mistake if we tried to dismiss "Hollywood" on these grounds for it has the greatest concentration of artistic people anywhere in the world.

TWO TYPES

It always used to be said that the film world's "Hollywood" was owned, controlled and managed by Jewish people drawn from all parts of the earth. It was said that the reason for this was two-fold, one "The get-rich-quick idea" and secondly, "the Jewish race has produced some of the greatest artists and creative geni of the whole world". To-day, you can still see two distinct groups of people there, the more crude business type and the genuine intelligensia. The friendliness and overwhelming hospitality of this latter group has to be experienced to be believed. The extraordinary phenomena of to-day is the colossal growth of the power and influence of Roman Catholics. Although Roman Catholics are in the minority in America by many millions they are the most active and politically alert. The art of the film industry has attracted many Europeans and it is not unnatural to find that they are Roman Catholics, and in so concentrated an industry it is easy to understand why they wield so great an influence.

To understand religion in films, one simply must understand this background, and to know that some 10 or 12 years ago, Father Devlin set up his office in this hub of the film world to give liaison and assistance in all matters relating to his Church. He has been eminently successful, and when any script bears on religion, his telephone bell rings and he gives, with his assistants, masterly advice tempered with extensive film knowledge. Then again we must understand the setting up of the Legion of Decency. We in England are apt to laugh at this title but it rocked America many years ago and it arose in this way. Films were getting pretty grim, generally vulgar and tawdry when suddenly the Roman Church banned a particular film. Believe it or not, but the Box Office in certain areas, particularly Richmond, dropped below half. This so shook the film magnates that they bowed before the storm. One world-famous script writer, who professed no religion, told me in Hollywood that, in his opinion, had the movie industry stood their ground those many years ago, both the box office and the confession boxes would have been full, and then artists, like himself,

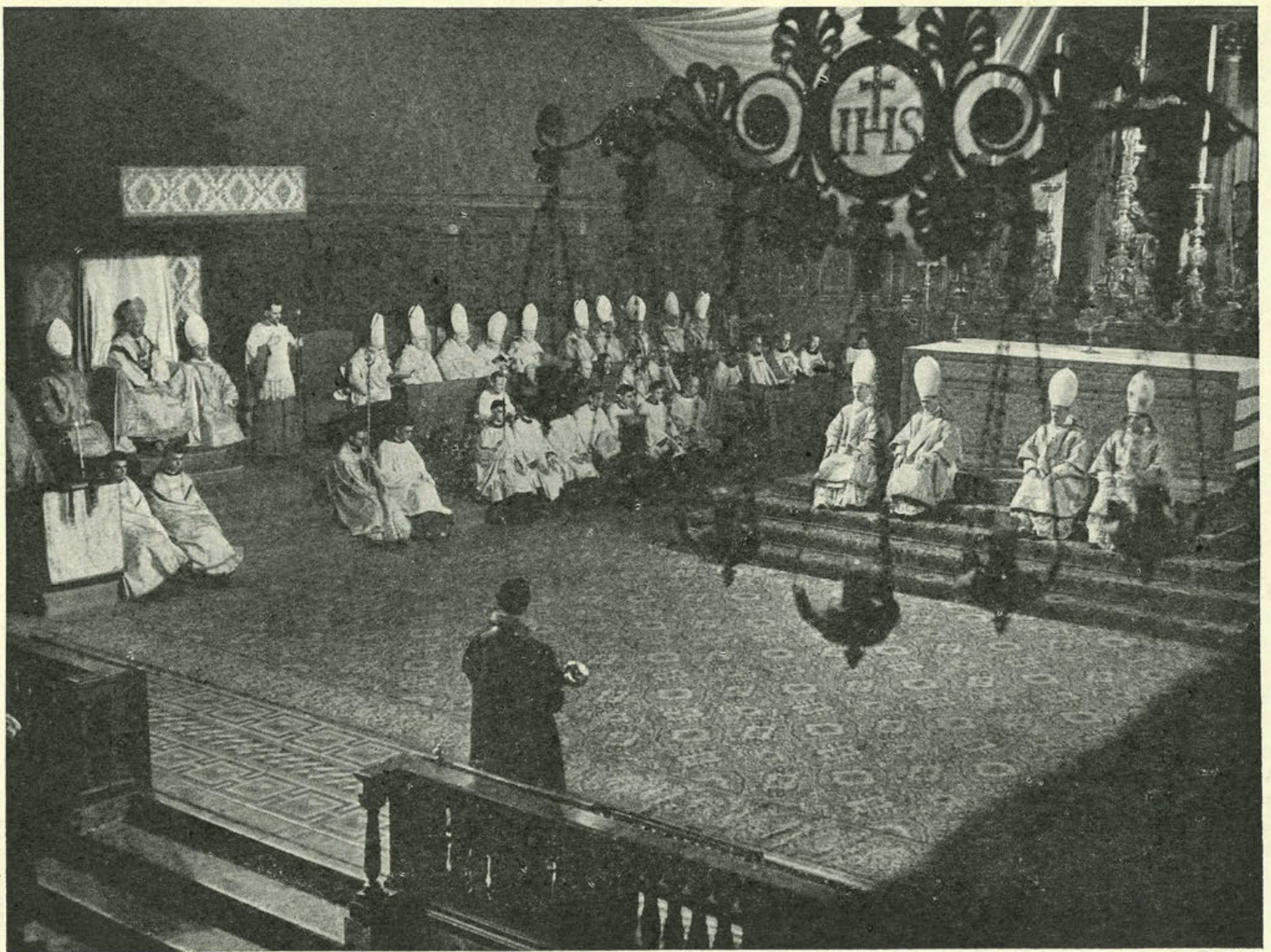
would be unfettered by organised representation. Art for art's sake, would be free! I wonder!

It is possible to have too easy-going an assessment of the power of the opposition caused by a public affront to good taste. Anyway, they set up an office called the Hays Office which has subsequently become the Johnson Office and the Motion Picture Producers' Association. They accepted a code of rules and regulations more or less dictated by the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency. This still operates, and is an example for good or ill of organised representation. These movie magnates know just how far they can go in what may be described as "ballyhoo for the box office". The head of the office at the present time is a leading Roman Catholic, Mr. Joseph Breen, who can read a script and put his finger immediately upon the one point which will cause censorship difficulties or receive religious opposition from the religious groups. Producers are becoming more and more alive to the power of the Church of Rome and comments on scripts and productions are not only invited but accepted. Film producers who know that there are to be religious scenes in their films seek out Father Devlin's advice before submitting it to Mr. Breen's office, thus saving a considerable amount of correspondence and cutting. From my point of view, as an Anglican vicar and one who for about fifteen years has been deeply involved in the film world, I would like to see the same care, accuracy and intimate respect paid by film producers on both sides of the Atlantic to the religious susceptibilities of the world-wide Anglican Communion and Protestants generally.

The question of Box Office has to come very largely into the picture because so much depends upon it with so expensive an industry as films. Are we not right in claiming that Britain has taken the lead in imaginative experiments? In many ways the Box Office is unpredictable, although there are certain lines upon which the unimaginative producer could play for safety.

Religion plays such a large part in the make-up of man, whether it be true or false, that it is not surprising that it finds its way into films. In fact, if films are to be a reflection of life as we humans live it, then it must play a part in films as it does in books. The films that take you into the world of make-believe in glorious Technicolor, with people bursting into song, or swooning into each other's arms cannot be expected to show much of the religious side of man's nature.

There are times when we pay our money at the cinema in order to be taken into this world of make-believe, but there are other times when we pay our money to see some stark realistic film which shows life as we live it. More and more in Britain we are seeing these factual films. If too much religion is brought into them it might be feared that the Box Office would suffer. In fact a little while ago I had a long discussion with J. Arthur Rank on this very point, and one of the reasons he gave for not showing that impressive feature film *The Great Commandment* (20th Century Fox, directed by Irving Pichel, produced by the Rev. James K. Friedrich) was that people might say they had paid their money to be entertained and were shown a film of a religious theme, and that if the Box Office were affected, it would take three weeks for that cinema to recover.



Milan Cathedral

Universalis

How often have we heard the remark in Britain "why have so many films appeared with Roman Catholicism as the one and only religion, sometimes playing the major part and at other times just taken for granted"? Yes, religion in films has become so profoundly Roman Catholic that the smallest observer cannot but help notice it and he is not being anti-Catholic if he observes it. May I list you a few films: *Boys Town*, *Men of Boys Town*, *San Francisco*, *Joan of Paris*, *Christmas Holiday*, *Guadalcanal Diary*, *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, *The Sullivans*, *Music for Millions*, *Mutiny in the Big House*, *Passage to Marseilles*, *Assignment to Brittany*, *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, *Next of Kin*, *Keys of the Kingdom*, *Song of Bernadette*, *Going My Way*, *Bells of St. Mary*, *The Green Years*, *The Last Chance*, *Sun Bonnet Sue*, *Romance of the West*, *Bandits of Sherwood Forest*, *Bell for Adano*, *Back to Bataan*, *Cornered*, *Cisco Kid Returns*, *The Fighting Guardsman*, *Paris Underground*, to mention but a few. It is to the credit of Roman Catholic liaison that in most cases the priest and the services are beautifully presented, and many of these films portray a thoroughly wholesome, dignified representation of the Church. None of these films were financed by the Church, and had they been they would undoubtedly have been complete flops at the Box Office.

When the "Towards the Conversion of England" Report deals in a couple of pages with the cinema, it shows how little it understands the fundamental problems and political manoeuvring of the film world. It implies, in fact it says so, that good films always make money. One can only presume that a cloistered canon wrote these words. It goes on to suggest that the Church should finance films like *The Song of Bernadette* and get its money back. The Church would be even more penniless than it is already. If, on the other hand, the Church of England could evolve some sort of liaison, imaginative and creative, towards the film industry it might by peaceful penetration be able to secure a religious "super" and the dignified presentation of any Anglican scenes and Anglican clergy. Even if it is not evident in America, it certainly is in Britain that Church of England vicars are not presented with that degree of accuracy and dignity which is found in the films above mentioned. The dear vicar is often portrayed as a bit of a buffoon and a stage parson. Of course, none of us have lost our sense of humour and can laugh more heartily at ourselves than at anyone else. But on a massed scale it tends to inculcate the idea that we Church of England, or, as we are sometimes called, Protestant clergymen are pretty poor fish.

The reason given to me in conferences at the Motion Picture Producers' offices in New York and Hollywood for the predominance of Roman Catholic priests, was that when they wish to clinch religion on the films with the minimum amount of expense to themselves and the minimum amount of waste of time, it could be done in a few seconds with a few feet by showing a Roman Catholic priest. I am not suggesting that what we want is to see a positive herd of Protestant collars on the screen but that the spiritual aspirations of man as portrayed on the films should go deeper than merely the outward symbols of any particular denomination of the Christian faith. His Holiness the Pope has recently issued a pronouncement on films calling for their use in the service of Christ. With this I heartily agree, because the world is in such a dangerous state and films can influence people for peace or war.

I learned an interesting slant on the British Board of Film Censors not only from the M.P.A. Office but also from general conversation and wisecracks. They wanted to know why the B.B.F.C. cut out Protestant religious scenes in American films, notably wedding services and the Lord's Prayer. Apparently even much-divorced film people do not like the idea of Britain getting the impression from films that all Americans get married by a Justice of the Peace! It was said that religious weddings were so often cut that it was a waste of time attempting to film them. They showed me chapter and verse of a dignified Protestant baptism which was cut out of the film *Dragonwyck*, and that cuts were made in reference to angels in *Hoodlum Saint*. They presumed that the Church of England must be represented on the British Board and had insisted on this type of pernickety cutting. We in England know that there is little or no liaison between officialdom of the Anglican Communion and that Board.

Rumours are rife as to various attempts to put religion, as they express it, in an entertaining way through the public cinema.

The swing towards Protestantism (how I hate the word!) has been noted and 20th Century Fox are working on *Circuit Riders*, about a Methodist parson; Frank Borzage, that great director, on *Fall on your Knees*; Cecil B. de Mille on *Samson and Delilah*; and Harry Edwards is looking for a script about an Anglican vicar and has flown over to see me about it.

In Hollywood I spent a considerable time "arguing" with Sydney Rogel on his script *So this is Earth* in which Victor McLaglen is due to play an angel who comes to earth. I believe it is in production or finished. Alexander Korda has just announced an idea of doing *King David* and, of course, *The Robe* still trails around with Frank Ross in R.K.O. studios with many a rumour. Walt Disney has astounding plans. He showed me the rushes of *How Dear to My Heart*, which deals with a small boy's fight to believe in God. Then we spent hours in his secret planning room where the walls were covered with the key drawings of a planned new cartoon with a moral—*Johnny Appleseed*. The Rank Organisation will be doing *Mary Magdalen* and a really top-flight religious super is very close to Mr. Rank's heart.

Probably the biggest and greatest film which the prowess of the film world will ever set its hand to is a colour masterpiece of the Life of Jesus. This will only be a masterpiece if it has that spiritual depth possessed by the Bible. Then it will speak to the hearts of men

before we are plunged into another war. The script I have been preparing for the President of 20th Century Fox is now being criticised by some of our best writers and professors before it is sent to him.

It may sound easy but there are many problems— theological, sectarian, textual, research, cinematic . . . to be balanced up. It is in modern speech in order to make the Christ of God live to our spiritually ignorant generation.

RELIGIOUS FILMS

The purely religious film is not designed for use in the cinemas, much as some of us might like to see them there, where they would be seen in their full quality. They are designed as an added weapon for the preacher or the teacher—not as a substitute for his existing efforts. They should therefore be conceived, produced and viewed as such, and because films are devoid of personality they cannot do their proper work by themselves.

The summary, film appreciation class or cross-questioning—call it what we will—is essential. Anyone can give a mere show but it takes a trained teacher or trained priest to put it over.

Those of us who have spent the best part of our lives trying to convert the Church to the use of films have been hampered by lack of funds, lack of films and poor projector equipment. No one has yet produced any money on a large scale for this work and some of us have spent all our savings.

The number of films is growing—there are Rank's pre-war short subjects, many of which are excellent, with the three more he is financing this year. The most noteworthy advance in the last few years is the rapidly-growing series of Bible Story films (15) and missionary films produced by the Rev. James K. Friedrich through international sharing of the costs. The international tie-up is between Cathedral Films Ltd. of Hollywood and Bible Films of Aylesbury and of Hollywood and the Australian Religious Film Society of Melbourne.

Cathedral Films production team in California is of course professional and the technical standard which has resulted show that the purely religious film can be first class. The team has over 20 films to its credit and the latest, including a colour teaching cartoon, show a great improvement. The American Bible Society and others in U.S.A. promise an output. The two main distribution networks in Great Britain are Religious Films Ltd., of Golders Green and Dawn Trust Ltd., of Aylesbury.

Religious film production will have to continue to be "subsidised" by Christian contribution because it takes about five years for a short film to recoup its production costs out of the small international 16mm. rentals. These will have to increase in volume in Britain if we in this country are to have a presentable output. The demand for religious films grows more insistent every year and I welcome less back chat and more positive output by anyone. "By their fruits ye shall know them".

A good religious film is the most difficult type of film to make but when it is good it rings a bell—not with a clerical critics' circle but with the ordinary folk. The Bible Story film *Who is my Neighbour* (*Good Samaritan*) at two trial runs on ABC Saturday morning cinemas held the children spellbound and drew forth applause.

On the question of projector equipment something needs to be said pretty loudly or there will be more heartache. Manufacturers of 16mm. projectors should realise

that the Churches are often as large as the cinemas and the acoustics always infinitely worse. Usually the parson requires a 12 to 13-foot screen with a 70 or 100-foot throw. This means that the Churches require not midget portable equipment which would be ample for a normal hall but the nearest thing to a professional 35mm. projector in 16mm. as is humanly possible. I have experimented with Mercury Vapour Arcs and Carbon Arcs and pre-stages for this purpose. Having given hundreds of shows over many years in large churches and cathedrals on almost every type of projector, I know what it is to suffer under the appalling limitations of 16mm. Religious films have reached the "professional cinema" standard but when shown in 16mm. under inadequate conditions it is difficult to create the illusion of the film.

The development in war time of the daylight cinema van with a 16mm. Carbon Arc has proved a marvellous propaganda weapon for the National Savings Committee.

Now the Church Army has bought one which was recently dedicated by the Archbishop, who said to me afterwards that he hoped this method of films would be used more and more.

THE CRYING NEED

Lack of funds is the one fundamental need because amongst convinced Christians there is a storehouse of imaginative talent. A film that is to carry a spiritual message with spiritual power should not be farmed out to a normal unit. The art of the spirit should be made by those whose dream child it is.

There is a need for really potent scripts for 20 to 30 minute films, set either in biblical times or modern times. Out of the many scripts sent in to my office 99 per cent. are almost unreadable nonsense about angels or fantasies on the future life.

FESTIVAL IN EDINBURGH

IN ALL THE FILM FESTIVALS since the war there has been a section in which Documentary has been included. But many people have felt that in the Sturm and Drang of a long series of big feature programmes there is neither the time nor the atmosphere for Documentary to have a satisfactory showing. They will therefore learn with satisfaction that the organisers of the Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama have decided to include in it a section devoted entirely to documentary films. Documentary is to have its own Festival at last.

The site of this Festival is on all counts appropriate. It was in Scotland that the first British documentary was made—by a Scot who was to become the first formative personality of the movement. The Scottish Office have always been among the most active and forward looking sponsors of information films, and in the vigorous and well-organised Scottish film societies documentary has long had an enthusiastic and well-informed audience. Indeed it was from the Edinburgh Film Guild that the initiative for a Documentary Festival originally came, and it is they who have undertaken its organisation with the support and co-operation of the International Festival Society, who are running the "Northern Salzburg".

Under the chairmanship of Norman Wilson, founder and now chairman of the Guild, an advisory committee has been set up containing representatives of all the organisations in Scotland interested in films (including the Scottish Film Council of the British Film Institute, the Scottish Information Office and the C.E.A.), together with the F.D.F.U. and A.S.F.P., and the Central Office of Information. At the first meeting of this Committee, it was announced that the Festival has the strong support of U.N.E.S.C.O. and that John Grierson, Director of Communications (Mass Media), will attend and speak at the opening performance.

The Festival will be held at the "Playhouse", Edinburgh's largest cinema, with 3,300 seats, on the afternoons and

evenings of Sunday, August 1st, and of Sunday, September 7th, giving a total running time of about 10 hours. As the object of the Festival is to give a general view of the best recent documentary work, the Committee considered that the usual competitive organisation would be inappropriate and might indeed lead to a mere repetition of Cannes, Prague and Brussels. It was therefore decided that films should be entered by invitation only and for this purpose a small Selection Committee was set up to which Basil Wright and Paul Rotha will act as advisers. This Committee is hard at work, and though it is not yet able to announce the titles of the films to be shown, the main outlines of the programmes have already been settled. Each will be built round one important feature documentary; according to the provisional selection these will represent France, Italy, U.S.A. and Great Britain. The remainder of the programme will be occupied by shorts from Czechoslovakia, Canada, Australia, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., France, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland and Great Britain. Though the Committee are determined to make the performances as international as possible, they will be guided in their choice principally by the merit of the films.

In addition to these four set performances, the Edinburgh Film Guild are proposing to run a series of supplementary shows for specialised audiences in their own cinema throughout the week. These shows will contain films of technical interest, those which the Committee could not include in the main performances for reasons of time, and also some of the great classics of documentary which everybody talks about but few have seen.

The Festival has naturally aroused the keenest interest in the documentary movement in this country. We are generally credited with the production of the best documentaries in the world and it will be interesting to see if this is still true. We have certainly taught the world much about documentaries. Perhaps this Festival will show that we can now learn much from it.

YOU MAKE YOUR MOVIES

By

ARTHUR ROSEHEIMER, JNR.

FILMS, LIKE BANANAS, come in bunches. The bunches, called cycles by the trade, are groups of pictures either based on the same theme, or using the same locale, or about the same sort of people, and all appearing within a few months of each other. They are no strange, new phenomenon: everyone remembers the gangster cycle, the newspaperman cycle, screwball comedy, and, through the unhappy years just passed, the various cycles of war films.

Just how these cycles come about no one has yet satisfactorily explained. It is probably superficial to say that they are touched off by the public's clamorous response to one particular picture, on the theory (very popular in Hollywood) that nothing succeeds like a past success. Too often it is possible to establish the fact that a similar film, equally good or bad artistically, preceded it unnoticed. Doubtless, like great men, the pace-setters at the box office are perfectly attuned to the nation's psychological mood at any particular moment, and perhaps some day research analysis will show just how this fascinating process actually works.

There is no question, though, as to what terminates such a series: too many pictures on any one subject, and the public is off looking for something new again. This restless search for novelty on the part of the audiences, the producers' insufferable bounty in supplying vast quantities of it once they have found it, may not always make everyone happy, but it does give an almost infallible clue to popular tastes at any given moment. It does indicate what the public is thinking, when they started thinking it, and when they stopped.

There is certainly no trick to discovering what the public favours today. Turn to the movie section of your favourite paper, and it is all there in front of you. Psychological horror films, tales of violence and sadism, "big" (as opposed to low budget) westerns, popularized biographies, some concern for the problems of war veterans, and fantasies which introduce the supernatural in behalf of their heroes—these are the themes that hold today's audiences.

Of all successful movie types, far and away the most popular right now is the psychological murder film. This predilection for blood on the part of American movie-goers has not escaped the attention of the critics or of sociologists, who have seen in it an irresponsible distortion of true American values, the sublimation of sadistic impulses engendered by war-time experiences, or a threat to the character growth of the nation's youth. Other observers,

both here and abroad, have compared it to the enormous popularity of horror films of the Pabst-Fritz Lang school in the demoralized, inflation-ridden Germany of the 'twenties.

Whatever the case, the interest in hard-boiled melodrama that began with *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*, reached unprecedented heights last year and has given no sign of waning. In them the grim details of dirty fighting, of murder for hire and sheer sadism are treated with a verisimilitude and gusto unknown to the screen until just a few years ago when the same sort of details had been marshalled as anti-Nazi arguments in *The Cross of Lorraine*, *The Seventh Cross*, and similar movies. These anti-Nazi films, incidentally, became box-office anathema long before their actual need had passed. The public had simply gotten too much of a good thing. Producers, however, sought to bolster the series with increasingly sensational vignettes of torture and death, and it is this sensationalism that has been carried over into today's cynical cycle, in which violence is celebrated for the sake of violence and the motives of both hero or heroine are avowedly mercenary.

"REALISM"

As pictures that spoke of patriotism and heroic resistance fell from favour, films like *Double Indemnity*, *To Have and Have Not*, and *Murder, My Sweet* began to introduce into familiar story types the brutality and horror that the public had come to accept in the war pictures. And, with at most a passing reference to ideas or ideals, men like Philip Marlowe, the detective hero of *Murder, My Sweet* (who was also the hero of *The Big Sleep* and *Lady In The Lake*, and prototype of many more), declared themselves willing to do whatever they were asked "for \$25 a day plus expenses", and no questions asked. Idealism was something for war heroes; these pictures would have none of it. And their lack of idealism was put on the screen with a directness, a naturalism, a realism which brought comment wherever the films were shown.

This urge for realism, it must be noted however, is not for a realism that *explains*. It is not the realism of *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Strange Incident* that tries to bring us to grips with vital issues. Indeed, there has been no serious film in recent months that has tried to do that at all. More and more, realism has come to mean a passion for the minutiae of disordered private lives—the drunken hero of *The Lost Week-end*, the dipsomaniacal heroines of *Humoresque* and *Smash-up*, the paranoiac hero of *Under-Current* and of many similar psychological studies. What makes this all so disturbing is the fact that the public, which has always identified itself with the people on the screen, seems quite willing to accept its favourite stars in these debased roles.

Pure violence has always been the touchstone of American westerns. It is especially significant, then, that the westerns should have emerged into the class of expensive entertainment just before and just after the world's bloodiest and most widespread war. What the anti-Nazi films of 1940 and most films of today seem to say in effect is that war and fascism are wrong because of the barbarism inherent in each. But the violence in the western film is of a peculiarly American frontier type—the free-swinging, man-to-man slugging contest. The western films are saying that Americans do not really object to violence—if it is American violence. *Duel in the Sun*, the biggest, most expensive saga of the west to date, exploits this raw strain through two and a quarter turbulent hours, glamourizing it, and even finding in violence the sublimation of sex itself.

FANTASY

The popularity of the fantasy film, in which the supernatural intervenes to straighten out the lives of the characters, and not infrequently the plot as well, hints at even more complex currents. As America headed into World War II, many individuals, feeling a sense of personal helplessness, took eagerly to the notion that some kind providence would prevent each poor sparrow from falling. The pictures made during this time satisfied the yearning for security quite as much as the glittering romances of Park Avenue and the Riviera satisfied entirely different longings in the midst of the depression.

The end of the war did nothing to diminish the appeal of fantasy movies. In fact, their increasing number would seem to indicate that the feelings which inspired them are on the rise. With the relinquishing of war-time controls, our destinies have in some measure been returned to us. But with the atom bomb and the possibility of a World War III constantly being dangled before our eyes, is it any wonder that—like the hero of the wryly titled *It's A Wonderful Life*—we need some assurance that divine providence is on our side? The enormous popularity of religious films at present attests to the same thing.

Or, if there be something short of divine intervention, perhaps it is the psychologist, the man who patches up broken and twisted minds, relating them again to the world in which all must live. It is interesting to note that the American screen had not begun to touch on psychological themes until just before the war, in films like *Light Must Fall*, *Rebecca*, and *Rage in Heaven*. In 1942, two of the year's outstanding pictures, *Now Voyager*, and *King's Row*, ventured further into the fields of abnormal psychology than any earlier American picture had dared to go.

PSYCHOLOGY

As the war progressed, themes of a psychological nature proved more and more engrossing to American audiences, with studies of pathological murder taking the ascendance.

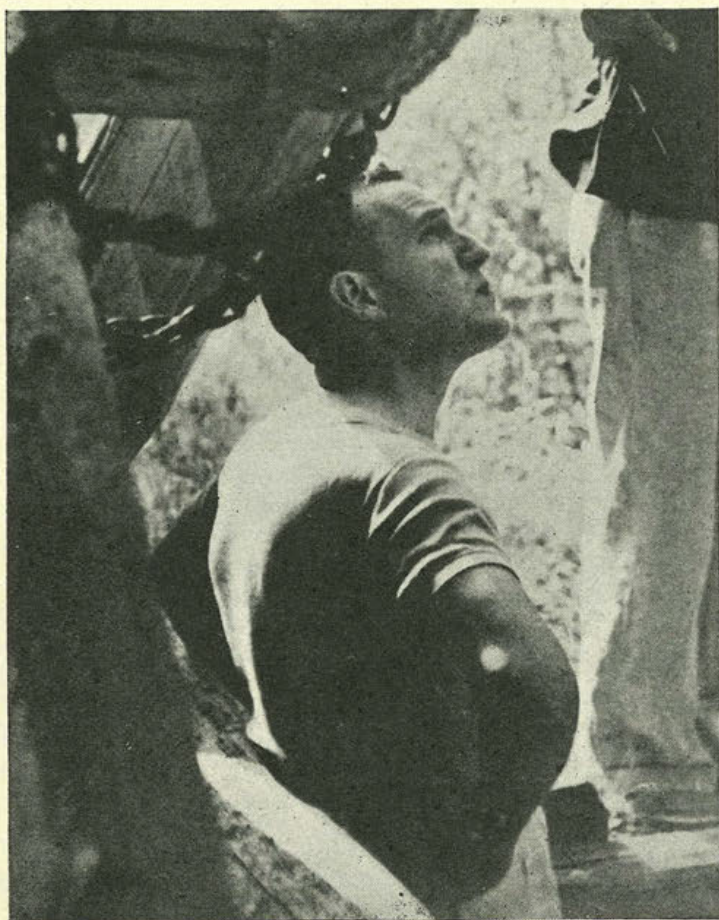
In these tales it was not the fact of murder which was fascinating, but rather the motives for the deed. In *Night Must Fall*, no one seriously questioned what Robert Montgomery was carrying around in his sinister little hat-box, while in *The Stranger* Orson Welles committed murder in full view of the audience almost at the start of the picture. The question was no longer the old-fashioned one of "Who done it?" but "Why did he?" The mere fact of murder was placidly accepted. The world had come to know death too well.

Biography, long a staple of the motion picture industry, has had a sensational rebirth in the past three years, and particularly in those films purporting to tell the life stories of composers or popular stage personalities. Starting early in 1945 with *A Song to Remember* (Chopin) and *Rhapsody in Blue* (Gershwin), the trend became a torrent last year with *Night and Day* (Cole Porter), *The Jolson Story*, *Till The Clouds Roll By* (Jerome Kern), *The Dolly Sisters*, and *Song of Scheherazade* (Rimsky-Korsakoff, although the resemblance was certainly elusive).

The attraction of real-life success stories, the glamour of famous names, the nostalgic appeal of the music, as well as the lavish production given each of these pictures, have all combined to make the films in this series among the top box-office successes of recent years. But it is perhaps no accident that the biographical details have been so subordinated or romanticized as to be barely recognizable, and the hero's rise to riches and renown made invariably to depend on some lucky stroke of fate. As a result, these "real-life" stories actually appear less real, less credible than the seamier films that admit to being fiction.

Violence, the supernatural, "rags to riches", and the enigma of the human personality seen through the lens of modern screen psychology—these, then, are the magic formulae for commercially successful films today. Clearly their popularity must be of greater interest to the student of a nation's temperament than that of the merely topical movie—the spy, underground, or returned veteran story—which depends on headlines for its appeal. Such cycles die when public interest in the subject is dead. Long-range successes, however, must be understood as something apart from mere topicality. Not only do such cycles change less quickly, but they frequently furnish the springboard for still other cycles.

Thus in production in Hollywood today are a religious western and a supernatural horror movie, amalgams and extensions of current highly successful trends. That these trends have their roots in the basic temper of American society today is confirmed by their repeated successes at the box-offices of the nation. In a very direct way it is their box-office success that accounts for their number, their number that attests to their popularity. We may not like these films ourselves; they may seem to us evidence that, after forty years, escapist, hopped-up, and unrealistic films are still Hollywood's mainstays. But movies are not produced in a void. It is the people of America who make the movies they stand in line to see.



JEAN GRÉMILLON

By

HAZEL HACKETT

(Illustrations by courtesy of the Cinemathèque Française.)

JEAN GRÉMILLON deserves to be better known in this country, for his work, while always recognisable as that of a French director, comes close to that of the English documentary school. He himself started quite independently with the making of short films, and in his subsequent full-length films he has preserved the documentary approach to a subject and retained the distinctive style which he developed in his early work. He is intensely aware of his country's civilisation, knows and understands his own people, and has the gift of putting them and their background on the screen with imagination and authenticity.

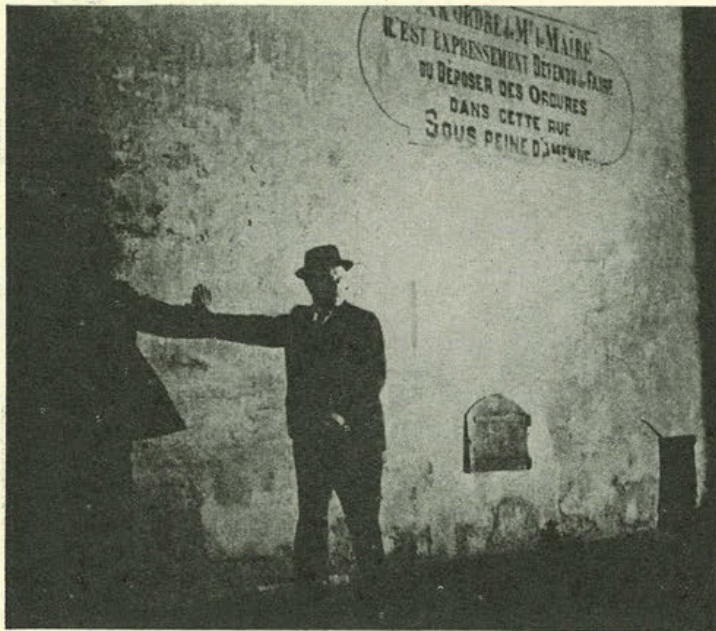
I first became actively interested in him in 1945 when I saw his film *Le Ciel est à vous* which he made in 1943. Among the over-literary, over-artistic productions of the Occupation period, Grémillon's film came like a breath of fresh air from his native Normandy. He refused to accept the dictatorship of subject imposed by the German censorship and found his own way of presenting to the French people a picture of their fellow-countrymen which was honest, touching and inspiring. The story is not given a date nor even a specific location. His hero and heroine, Pierre and Therese Gautier (played by Charles Vanel and Madeleine Renaud), are garage-keepers in a French provincial town who are forced to move their business because the site of

their garage is wanted for the construction of an aerodrome—an event which is destined to break up their home not only literally but figuratively. First the husband, then the wife, succumbs to the fascination of flying. They train as pilots; they use all their savings to buy a plane; Therese plans to break a world record. This is more than the story of an obsession. Grémillon, who consistently fought the pervasive German propaganda, had a message to get across to the French people, and this film was the medium for it. In a moving scene, the evening before Therese is to take off on her flight, Pierre suddenly awakens to the cold reality of what their obsession is costing them—a neglected home, estranged children, all their savings spent, their future and their lives in peril. In terrified words, he makes his wife also understand, and, in a solemn resolve, they decide to abandon their plan. But next morning, they know that they must go on, because something within them is stronger than reason; and they cannot deny its impulsion without denying the best in themselves.

I saw Grémillon in Paris this spring in his fifth-floor flat in a quiet street which, although only a short walk from the Place de la Concorde, has all the feeling of a small Provincial town. Books in several languages line the walls of the salon, and the chief piece of furniture is a piano, significant pointers to the tastes of the President of the Cinemathèque Française, and the most scholarly of film directors. He was born in Normandy just over forty years ago. His interest in the cinema dates from his boyhood, and by 1926 he had made fifteen short films mostly on the lives and occupations of the people among whom he had grown up. *Tour au Large*, of which unfortunately not one copy remains, was a film on the work of the tunny-fishing fleets, and was the last of the documentaries of this period. It was, in Grémillon's words, "a film of impressions, a marriage of music and images", and he himself wrote the music, which was recorded and played as an accompaniment to the film on a mechanical piano. The film was first projected in 1927 at the Vieux Colombier, always ready to give a home to the avant-garde—and overnight Grémillon became a name known to the critics.

After this success, he was approached by a commercial firm, and in 1927 made his first dramatic film *Maldone*. This was followed in 1929 by *Gardiens du Phare*, in which he returned to his favourite theme of the sea in a story of lighthouse keepers, based on the book by Nicole Vedrès. Only one copy of this film still exists and is in Sweden. *La Petite Lise* in 1930 was his first "talkie", and *La Métisse*, *Gonzagne*, *Pattes de Mouche*, *Valse Royale* and *Gueule d'Amour* followed at intervals of about eighteen months. 1938 gave us *L'Etrange M. Victor*, a film well known in this country, and memorable for a delightful piece of character acting by Raimu.

Grémillon himself considers *Remorques* one of his most interesting films, and, surprisingly enough, it is the one which brought him the biggest commercial success. It is a story of salvage crews who work in the raging seas off Finistère. The story tells of the love of one man for the sea and for two women (played by Jean Gabin, Madeleine Renaud and Michele Morgan), but it is not told in a vacuum and, at the end, no solution is offered for the problem. Just as he used motor engines and sky scapes to get his atmosphere in *Le Ciel est à vous*, so Grémillon uses here ship's machinery and mountainous seas to create the



L'Etrange M. Victor

mood which will make us understand the reactions of his characters. This is man imaginatively portrayed in relation to and in terms of his environment. It is the use of natural elements that gives the film its atmosphere and poetry—the mighty death-dealing waves, the white wind-swept roads, the house set on the lonely cliff, the intimate wildness of the Breton landscape. The film was started in 1939, but work on it was suspended when the Germans occupied France, and it was finished under extremely difficult technical conditions in 1941.

With *Lumière d'Été*, made in 1942, Grémillon had difficulty of another kind—the Vichy censorship. This film is a study of present-day society in decomposition. Its chief characters are an artist who is a failure, a young man who is rotted with wealth, an ageing woman desperately trying to keep her lover, and, among this sordidness, two innocents, a simple girl who loves sunflowers, and a straightforward workman who keeps a cricket as a pet. Vichy objected to the theme because at that period their line was to ignore the ugly and the decadent, and so pretend that, in the New France, it was non-existent. Grémillon argued his case in long sessions before the Censorship committee, and eventually got it passed. The story of wasted and lost lives is set against a bare Southern landscape, ravaged by the wind and burnt by the sun, whose desolation is broken only by a massive blasting-works, and by the slow flight of a golden eagle across the heavy sky. There is something symbolical in the explosions which rip the earth asunder, and in the great bird of prey which hovers invulnerable and threatening in the sky above the man-made confusion. The sound-track has at times the quietness of desolation, and is punctuated by the shattering explosions of the mines, preceded by the wild sweetness of the Alpine horn that gives warning of danger. Grémillon throughout cunningly uses sound to heighten his cinematic effects. When Cri-Cri, poignantly played by Madeleine Reynaud, reminds her lover Patrice of their first meeting—it was after a performance at the Opera in which she had been dancing—they were wandering along the rue Auber—they drifted into a cinema where an American gangster film was showing,—the sound-track, behind Cri-Cri's voice, gives us the

small noises of a Paris street, then, with an abrupt change of atmosphere, American car-hooters, revolver cracks, the roar of pursuing cars, the sounds in fact that belonged to the sound-track of the film to which Cri-Cri refers. And when, in bitterness, she reminds him of the hunting "accident" which caused his wife's death, we see the scene not with our eyes, but, as it were, through the medium of our ears, as the soundtrack gives us the wild barking of the hounds, the far-off village bells, the yells of the beaters, the shot, and Cri-Cri's voice crying "C'était un accident! C'était un accident!" These two sound flashbacks are linked by the noise of shooting common to each of them, and are symbolical of the destructive nature of the relationship of Cri-Cri and Patrice. At the fancy-dress ball towards the end of the film, the music rises to a delirium of rhythm and intoxication in keeping with the debauched and reckless mood of the guests. And at the end there is quietness again, and simplicity, as the boy and girl, Julien and Michele, go down the road together, while a golden eagle turns in the summer sky, and, as the scenario directs, the song of the cricket gives way to music, "et c'est comme un autre grillon, puis deux-dix-cent-un gigantesque grillon qui chante l'été". *Lumière d'Été*, whose scenario and dialogue are by Prévert and Laroche, is an unusual film that contains at the same time bitter satire, real human values, a sense of poetry and drama, and a wonderful feeling for landscape.

After *Le Ciel est à vous* in 1943, Grémillon found that, under the increasingly rigorous German control, he could produce nothing that was compatible with his ideas, which he was in fact expressing in more active ways. As he himself has said in a broadcast to England on the French wireless last January, it was when he was working for the liberation of Paris that he had the idea of making *Le 6 juin à l'Aube*. Being a Norman, and, like all Normans, passionately attached to the region where he was born, he was tremendously moved by the news of the Allied landings on the coast. His feelings were shared by thousands, and, for that very reason, Grémillon felt that it was for him to try to record on celluloid the story in terms of one countryside of those historic days in the summer of 1944. So in August, he set out with Louis Page, his usual cameraman, and for twenty-five days they struggled against rain, mud and military restrictions to get the documentation they needed. When they returned to Paris, Grémillon started his work of editing, trying all the time to present an honest inventory of a countryside, as free from emotion as entries in a ledger—a record of 70 days of hell, described simply as "Cinematic Notes on the Anglo-American disembarkment". The first shots show reproductions of old prints alternating with photographs of 1944 Normandy, as made by nature and man, a country of rich farms, bush meadows, and quiet villages with exquisite churches and cathedrals. The military movements are described by means of animated maps of unusual clarity, but, once this necessary background has been given, we see neither generals nor soldiers, we become simply the witnesses of the martyrdom of a countryside. Here Grémillon shows great imagination in his choice of images. Instead of maimed human bodies, there are mutilated church statues, an arm that has been blown off, a head lying neglected in the dust, the pitted face of a cherub; instead of the awful anonymity of bombed destruction, there is a sowing machine with the needle still in the unfinished seam of a garment, the twisted machinery of a milk-separator, a prayerbook lying open in a pool of water, the kitchen chair that miraculously remains



Lumière D'Été

standing in a flattened landscape; instead of the new graves of fallen soldiers, we see the bombed old cemetery with broken artificial flowers, twisted ironwork and bleached bones scattered in the upturned earth. There are few people in this record—a schoolteacher who, in the ruins, tells his pupils of an earlier invasion, an old man and a young girl who talk to us haltingly of their experiences—unrehearsed stories told without drama by people whose quiet lives had been burst asunder. Grémillon himself speaks the commentary which he wrote, along with the music—not, as he himself said, because he thinks “one man must do everything”, but because he felt another person might try to add some emotion to images powerful enough to create their own emotional mood. This pictorial record is of absorbing interest not only to all Frenchmen, but to British people whose men fought in this area, and to the citizens of those British towns which have “adopted” some of the shattered towns of Northern France. A military campaign is usually described in terms of strategy and battle. Here it is told in terms of the destruction of a countryside in images that bring home to us in a way rarely attempted the real cost of total war.

Grémillon is at present working with Charles Spaak, his

favourite scenarist, on a new film set in the 16th century. Ostensibly a story of wandering Italian players who come to Paris for the marriage festivities of Henry of Navarre, its real theme is the religious struggle between Catholic and Protestant, and the political rivalries between Elizabeth of England and the Low Countries. It will be interesting to see how Grémillon tackles a historical theme, and if he succeeds, among costumes and pageantry, in preserving the quality of reality which has so far been at the centre of all his films.

Grémillon's work is always interesting because his approach to a subject is sincere and imaginative. His films are singularly free from clichés, and frequently achieve distinction because of his unusual power of creating atmosphere in terms of light, space and landscape, and of giving his characters a place in that atmosphere and explaining them in terms of it. I do not think that Grémillon has yet made the great film he is capable of making, but I believe that he is moving steadily towards it. And because, in addition to his considerable technical skill, he has the courage to be guided by an inner integrity, I am convinced that his name will be associated with lasting achievements in the world of the French cinema.

REVOLUTION OR RETROGRESSION?

By

HANS KELLER

MUSICAL SOUND IS GOING THROUGH a crisis. A regression is to be noted towards a primitive stage where clarity of, and sensitivity to, intonation, timbre, dynamics, balance, texture, do not matter much, where indeed the hearer is satisfied as long as there is noise, and plenty of it. Many of us seem to have grown so used to the thought of high explosives that anything more finely shaded in volume, or somewhat more definite in pitch, will no longer do. At the same time a bomb blowing up the Albert Hall would make a more agreeable noise to the same musician than what he has hitherto heard within that miraculous building. That the danger-point in the degeneracy of sound (re)production has definitely been reached is shown by a variety of gruesome symptoms: Singers and strings wobble to an extent that makes one wonder whether the human voice and the bowed instruments are still to be counted among the instruments yielding notes of definite pitch; a *cappella* choir generously go off pitch (to the extent of three semitones, to be exact) under the critic's approval; and while mechanical sound reproduction is continuously improved upon, nobody cares whether these improvements are actually applied, or used to their full effect, in particular instances, with the result that they mostly aren't. In the cinema, orgies of sound distortion in respect of pitch, quality, and intensity are solemnized with especial fervour. Often (as in the case discussed on p. 86) the projection is responsible, at other times the flaw lies in the sound track. When the worst comes to the worst, recordist, projectionist, critic, and audience collaborate in making the catastrophe as complete as inhumanly possible—critic and audience by commending the performance.

The worst comes to the worst in what ought to have been a revolutionary experiment, i.e. the production of the first filmized opera¹, *The Barber of Seville*. The sound reproduction in this film is such that I cannot bring myself to listen to it for more than about 40 minutes at a time. If this sort of thing is allowed to continue, we may soon say goodbye to any form of decently reproduced film music, not to speak of the repercussions such productions must have upon musical life in general. Perhaps the most depressing point is that our best and, on other occasions, most penetrating critics (from some of whom the present writer has learnt a great deal) have hardly taken any steps to prevent a recurrence of this acoustic disaster.

SOUND: (a) QUALITY

There have been, to be sure, one or two mild criticisms of the sound track. Thus Elizabeth Frank² speaks of "an indifferent sound track" that "does not give full value to the beautiful voices", and "The Times" film critic³ says that "there is one⁴ drawback: the voices seem to come not

from individual mouths but from the whole screen". William Whitebait⁵ notes the same defect, and also "a metallic tone and slight buzzing on top notes and ensembles . . . inseparable from celluloid sound track". The tone is indeed metallic to a degree which makes a proper perception of tone colour, or for that matter of the music as a whole, impossible over long stretches. While I am grateful to Mr. Whitebait for mentioning the buzzing, I suggest that this is not confined to top notes and ensembles, and that it is no wise slight. And I do not think that these faults are inseparable from celluloid sound track, not to that extent, anyway. What about *Melody of Youth* or, to take a more topical example, *Instruments of the Orchestra*? But buzzing or no buzzing, the reproduction of timbre in the *Barber* is exceptionally poor.

(b) INTENSITY

Again, in respect of sound intensity, only very few passages (e.g. the Allegro of the 3rd act's Terzetto: "Zitti zitti, piano piano") are at all acceptable. In many places we get an intolerable over-amplification of volume and (even literally!) at the same time a ridiculous feebleness of sound. Result: Nonsense is made of textural balance, if not indeed of everything else. At the beginning of the 3rd act's quintet, for instance, the orchestra's semiquavers following the recitativo introductory bars, and marking the real beginning of the number, are so weakly reproduced as to be hardly audible behind Basilio's absurdly roaring "Servitor di tutti quanti"; consequently the passage loses its entire significance. This film has actually accomplished the feat of making the singer shout down the orchestra: a nightmare that sounds like the daydream of a singer whose weak voice has driven him crazy.

It is in any case no easy matter to bear Rossini's "aggressive noisiness" (E. J. Dent⁶); you can imagine what happens to the *Barber's* first Finale when it is doubled in sound intensity, or rather you cannot. Yet the second Finale is far more normal in volume, so we must not be told that excessive noise could not have been avoided.

A sadly humorous example of dynamic exaggeration and distortion is Basilio's calumny aria. Italo Tajo's "piano, piano . . . sotto voce . . ." which was obviously sung pianissimo in the studio, comes out with more than forte intensity. Naturally the effect of the following crescendo comes to nothing, the fortissimo is a monster of dynamic deformity, and the point of the aria is completely lost.

(c) PITCH CONTORTIONS

On the one hand there are oscillations of pitch on single notes, forming a mechanical, and deadly, variety of wobbling;

² "News Chronicle", 9.5.47.

³ 8.5.47.

⁴ Italics dissenting mine.

⁵ "New Statesman", 17.5.47.

⁶ "Opera", 1945.

¹ Just as we reserve the term "radio play" for plays written for the radio, I propose to reserve the term "film opera" for prospective operas written for the film—an art form that, for good or ill, is likely to arise.

on the other hand we get equally destructive long-term changes of pitch, of which I offer here a short selection in order of their appearance: The first act ends in A flat instead of G; Rosina's Cavatina at the beginning of act II is in F instead of E; but by the end of Basilio's calumny aria we have fallen down 3 semitones, i.e. one whole tone below normal⁷, so that we are now in C instead of D: Who would have thought that cinematic music could sink to such depths? The recitative preceding Bartolo's E flat aria is at first fairly normal, later markedly on the sharp side, while the aria itself is exactly normal; the following first finale, however, is again more than a quarter tone sharp. Bartolo's G major arietta in act III is normal, but is followed by the above-mentioned quintet starting in D instead of E flat. At this point the listener is advised not to be prematurely annoyed, for in the middle of this concerted number we jump back to normal. The thunderstorm is a semitone, Berta's aria just a little less sharp; and thus prepared for the finish, we gloriously end in G sharp instead of G.

(d) INTERMISSIONS AND OMISSIONS

Every student of the cinema knows that "the sound track . . . is continuous".⁸ In the *Barber*, however, it isn't. Chords accompanying the *secco* recitatives are interrupted and heard twice. A serious omission occurs at the beginning of Basilio's calumny aria which starts in the middle of the first bar; we cannot reproach the virginal listener if he has no idea what is happening here.

PRODUCTION: (a) PERFORMANCE

In most places the quality of the performance as such has to be guessed rather than ascertained. One suspects a largely superb rendering. In a few passages, where the sound reproduction permits it, one is even given one or two moments of delight. Tito Gobbi's (Figaro) legato semiquavers in the 2nd act's G major duet for instance, or Ferruccio Tagliavini's (Almaviva) demisemiquavers in the 3rd act's duettino, come out well enough to make one realize how impeccably they are sung. Natalia Nicolini (Berta) well captures the spirit of her only aria, though her triplets are not sufficiently distinct. There is one place where the orchestra's (Royal Opera House, Rome, under Giuseppe Morelli) fine playing can be perceived, i.e. the beginning of the first Allegro in the 3rd act's quintet. The only disappointing part seems to be Rosina's: Nelly Corradi must fight her wobble. The acting is virtuosic at its best and conventional at its worst; the most outstanding effort is perhaps Tito Gobbi's.

(b) CUTS

"... the first (film) to be made of a full-length opera" (Elizabeth Frank). Well, it depends on what one understands by full-length. I agree that an attempt has been made to present something that sounds like a full-length opera. But the attempt has failed. Let me hasten to add that nobody minds reasonable cuts in Rossini, as his music tends to be tautological rather than taut. But while it would thus seem to be comparatively easy to cut him up into chunks, these chunks must be chunks, i.e., as my dictionary says, "solid blocks". The cutting in the *Barber*, however, has been done with little sensitivity to formal solidity and balance. To cut Berta's short *da capo* aria after the first division is almost worse than cutting out the whole number. (And structural considerations apart, this cut robs us of the repetition of

probably the most interesting spot in the opera from the harmonic standpoint.) The surgeon's assumption seems to have been that the sole requirement for his amputations was a full close in the home key. And it has been reserved for the audiences of this production to witness a thunderstorm without either beginning or end: All we get is the C minor section, leading what is originally a straightforward piece of programme music directly *ad absurdum*. An utterly senseless cut is that of the last 4 bars in the Introduzione, as just a few seconds are gained thereby; or are we here confronted with another flaw in the sound reproduction? Both the 3rd act's duettino and the quintet have been far more intelligently cut in the New London Opera Company's current production, with only a few bars' loss of time as compared with the film version. Another cut where the gain in time stands in no relation to the musical loss is that of the 3rd act's terzetto. And in view of all these mutilations, that (at other times) most admirable and reliable critic, C. A. Lejeune⁹, reports cheerfully that the *Barber* has been recorded "without cuts"¹⁰. What has in point of fact been recorded were, now and again, odds without ends.

(c) THE CHOICE OF THE WORK

It is obvious that a film company will jump at a popular work, and that an Italian company will jump at the *Barber*. It is another question whether this is, culturally speaking, the right thing to do. I don't say it isn't, but since everyone seems to concentrate on the pros, I should like to point out one or two cons. One of the prime functions of filmized opera must be popularisation, and there is little point in popularizing the popular. Besides, as Beethoven has indicated¹¹, too much of Rossini, in spite (or because) of his mastery, can easily spoil audiences' tastes. I personally think that we (and not only we) have had quite enough *Barbers* lately. True, it isn't fashionable to say so today when the high-brow is of nothing more proud than of posing as low-brow (while the deep-brow hasn't even a name), and when otherwise competent musicians talk in the same breath of Rossini's *Barber* and Mozart's *Figaro*, while we are supposed to have entered an era of unprecedented understanding of Mozart's art. This is where I give up. "But here", I hear you say, "you prefer a film-murder of the *Barber* to a film-murder of *Figaro*, don't you?" I do.

CONCLUSION

But must there be murder?

In Dr. Manvell's review of the *Barber* we read:¹² "The important thing to recognize is that on a few thousand feet of celluloid an Italian opera can be transplanted bodily for the delight of London opera-lovers". I submit, the important thing to recognize is that though an Italian opera could perhaps be fairly bodily transplanted, it wasn't. I do not give this merely as my opinion, but as an objectively verifiable statement of fact. And I urgently implore Dr. Manvell as well as those other master-critics who have recommended this film to consider whether they would tolerate, outside the sphere of filmized opera, a similar murder of art, funeral included. For with their help we may effect a rebirth, whereas without it we shall witness exhumations.

⁹ "Observer", II.5.47.

¹⁰ On a previous occasion I have been privately reproached with attacking fellow-critics. My reply is (a) my attacks are factual, (b) I only attack good critics. *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*—the last word in a good sense. We critics need critics, too.

¹¹ "Beethoven, Briefe und Gespraechen," edited by Martin Hurlimann, Zürich, 1944.

¹² "Tribune", 16.5.47.

⁷ Accepting as normal the unobjectionable pitch at which the overture starts.

⁸ Roger Manvell, "Film", 1946.

IN SEARCH OF FILMS

By

IRIS BARRY

Director of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library

THE PERILS AND PLEASURES of diplomacy, even on a peripheral scale, had never really been brought home to me until, on a recent trip to Europe I found myself last fall, all unexpectedly, sitting in judgment on scores of new movies from a dozen different countries at the International Film Festival at Cannes. The actual screening sessions took place in the afternoons and at night, lasting from ten to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week for three weeks. We exhausted jury-members, wistfully aware of the blue tide and sun-drenched beach outside the Casino where we foregathered, were often summoned to meet in the mornings too, despite the many sumptuous galas, official lunches, supper and cocktail parties so skilfully organised within the framework of the Festival, and affording oddly little trace of the heroic improvisations, the frantic borrowings back and forth of scarce napery and silver which these occasioned. Too soon, however, we were made to realize that absenteeism anywhere, from any function, was inexcusable. Most countries had sent ranking government officials to represent them on the jury; everyone addressed his neighbour with suave formality as "cher ami" and "my dear colleague". Politicians and bigwigs, even an occasional ambassador, kept dropping in by plane. If the Polish delegate tottered to an early bed instead of going to the British shindig, if the American representative were affably to greet one of the film directors who arrived with the sizeable Russian contingent, absention or amicable gesture might well be regarded as a meaningful incident in international relations in that rarified air, bristling with national susceptibilities and under the watchful eyes of a couple of hundred journalists. Anything anybody said could create a breeze, especially as most conversations were carried on in internationally comprehensible but too often "bad" French, heaven only knows at times how misleadingly.

As the only woman on the jury, uneasily and, I thought, rather ridiculously representing all the United States in my own not particularly imposing person, I did of course regard the whole thing nevertheless as an honor and quite a responsibility. But it was a blow to realise that, if I stayed away from the showing of an Italian, French or American film which I had already seen previously, this could be construed to "mean" something. At times, the seats in the Casino theatre seemed very hard, especially when in the cause of global good-feeling I sat through *Gilda* or *The Stone Flower* for a second time while Cannes spread its, to me, forbidden allure and friends waited outside.

There were several comic incidents and some surprises, not the least of which was the unheralded arrival from India of an ox-eyed young Hindu with a new film under his arm: quite against the rules, everyone amiably agreed to let him show this curiosity. It proved to be considerably better than an interminable picture from Egypt which might well have dated from the same period as the (equally unconsciously funny) *A Fool There Was* of Theda Bara.

On the other hand, it was sobering to realise that *any* picture in a foreign language is dangerously apt to seem—in the phrase of Denmark's juryman, tactful counsellor-of-embassy Helge Wamberg—"trop long, trop bavard et bien ennuyeux". If this were less true about our own *The Lost Week-end* than most, certain wags hastened to point out that it only seemed so because of its internationally comprehensible elbow-lifting precepts which, they said, had kept the local bistros unusually full unusually late the night it was shown.

BARNUM AND BALLYHOO

As the final deliberations which culminated in the prize-giving at Cannes began to take place, weird and unfounded suspicions arose that the sometimes similar tastes of the Scandinavian, British and American jury members, or a different taste evinced in common by, say, Mexico and Czechoslovakia indicated more than met the eye. It was not, clearly, merely a question of prestige and prizes. The Cannes Festival was also a fair. Films were being sold, being advertised. The news that Norway had bought *Maria Candelaria* from Mexico electrified the cafés: Portugal was said to be miffed at the reception of her technically proficient but somnoric biography of the poet *Camoens*. Brochures, publicity of every sort choked one's doorway: tons of the stuff was being given away daily by every country represented—except the good old U.S.A. which (and I was surprised to discover this) had, unlike everybody else, no central film publicity office at Cannes, gave little or nothing away in printed or photographic form, sent no ambassador nor government official, gave no lunch party nor gala and was covered by only three journalists who were present on their own initiative and two of them very briefly. For that matter even the films we sent to Cannes were not, as a group, particularly impressive and certainly not chosen with an eye to European taste.

Only the exquisite tact of our French hosts—the Mayor and municipality of Cannes jointly with the French government—brought the affair to a harmonious close by awarding a prize to the best film of every country but none for an internationally "best" entry. As the prizes took the form not of medals or diplomas but of paintings by contemporary French artists, the expression on the faces of some of the recipient jurymen not, one surmised, themselves particularly addicted to modern art, was something to behold at the gay prize-giving, over which Mme. Georges Bidault presided.

This exposure to so huge a flood of new films at Cannes was a strange and illuminating experience for all of us but perhaps most so to me, since I had originally gone to

Europe for a brief three weeks purely in the interests of old, not new, movies. The Museum of Modern Art's Film Library was anxious to renew its contacts with similar organisations abroad—the Cinemathèque Française in Paris, the National Film Library in London. And it was pleasant to welcome to our International Federation of Film Archives new members—concerned like us with the preservation of screen classics—from Italy, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia. It also seemed like a miracle, for most of us, to find ourselves in Paris again, to be present as the guests of Michel Fourré-Cormeray, director-general of French Cinematography, at a delightfully informal dinner in the restaurant at Versailles with which our meetings were initiated.

Our main business, of course, was to try to negotiate exchanges between our various film collections and to find means, ultimately, of overcoming the various customs and other regulations which make such non-commercial exchanges so difficult or costly. Even the Museum of Modern Art's collection of films, large as it is, contains gaps: a trip to Europe—even if it had not been so much fun—was obviously worth while if I could pick up treasures like *The Blue Angel*, which first introduced a seemingly young lady named Marlene Dietrich, or dig out that famous ten minute *Assassination of the Duc de Guise* of 1908 for which none other than Saint-Saëns had composed an original musical accompaniment. Both of these I did obtain, and much else. But even at our modest little gathering in Paris, on such undisputed and common ground, there were a few eye-opening occurrences, not least of which was the evident, and quite touching, pleasure of the Italian representatives at finding themselves among us, no longer enemies but friends. It was odd, too, to hear people describing themselves as representing "little" or "big" countries, and to deduce that there was not necessarily any correspondence between "littleness" and lack of funds to be spent on creating a national film library. There was even a hilarious passage of arms between Poland and Czechoslovakia on this question of size and spending capacity: from the point of view of film archives, it made "big" America look comparatively quite small!

HIDDEN TREASURES

It had been solely a search for lost film treasures of yesteryear that sent me to Europe but, finally, led me to confront contemporary movies both at Venice and then at Cannes. But first to Brussels, where Count Henri d'Ursel, long a patron of experimental films, gave the Museum his own *La Perle*—Georges Hugnet wrote the script and starred in this little-known but important surrealist picture—and, a most considerate host, adduced also newer pictures like Henri Storck's excellent study of the painter Delvaux's somewhat startling canvases. Here, too, it was impossible to remain unaware of the very considerable political importance and esteem which is granted to any serious film activity in Europe. I first realised it when learning that as President of the Federation I was to be received at the Quai d'Orsay by Madame Bidault, who had long interested herself in matters cinematographic. Now in Brussels I found that the Cinemathèque de Belgique had been organised under the presidency of brilliant

young Senator Pierre Vermeulen whom word-of-mouth indicates as probable successor eventually to President Spaak. For that matter, many of the Film Libraries abroad are actually official organisations: though the oldest collections of film masterpieces, those of France and Italy and our own in New York are not. It was presumably as veteran filmgoer and historian of the movies that the American Embassy in Paris decided upon me as a suitable delegate to the Cannes Festival: or was it because no one else unconnected with the film industry happened to be around?

In any case, happy to have justification for a prolonged rather than a brief trip, I was now provoked by a suggestion from Luigi Comencini—young film director and guiding spirit of the Cineteca Italiana—to set off for Milan where, he said, he might possibly be able to put me on the track of a particular gem—none other than Charlie Chaplin's long unseen *The Kid*. Remember, the one with Jackie Coogan? To a film historian, the mere chance of being able to see it was as much an inducement to travel as would be the hope of seeing faint remaining traces of Leonardo's "The Last Supper" to an art historian. And providentially there came, too, at the last minute an invitation to attend the Film Manifestation in Venice. Off I set.

And if the notion of starting from Paris across France, over the Alps to Milan, thence to Rome and so north-east to Venice in an 8 h.p. Renault seems, retrospectively, a crazy thing to have undertaken, in fact it proved to be an enviable adventure. Only one of the three of us who so set out could drive: and she was an alluring but eccentric blonde whose interest in maps and landscape was markedly less than in such male figures as occupied the foreground. The third person was a poetical, philosophical Frenchman who, when anything went wrong with the car (which it frequently did) merely lay down by the roadside and slept. His main concern, other than a passion for films only surpassed by my own, was to obtain lemons which he then devoured whole. Yet if some of the black market gas we procured in Rome was mainly water—and there was no other, though the officials had charmingly given us coupons for "white" *benzina*, demands for which at any garage sent merry Italian laughter ringing to the welkin—and if, from the Italian border on, we encountered but one bridge that had not been blown out, nevertheless policemen were charming about telling us where to get our tank refilled, and admirable Bailey bridges replaced the endless gaps in the roads. Traffic, particularly round Leghorn in the form of army trucks and jeeps, was still terrific and hair-raising: and the quantity of oxen on Italian roads does not appear to have diminished. But if we often missed a couple of heart-beats, there were rewards as when, all three of us in foul tempers, quite hungry, and with perilously few of the lire one may legitimately import still remaining to us, we came round a corner and there, suddenly, against a spectacularly thunderous sky, stood the Tower of Pisa, still leaning, still gleaming in a shaft of sudden sunlight. If we were compelled out of politeness to agree to go several times in Milan with local friends to see "where we hung Mussolini"—a not at all interesting spot otherwise—we did see *The Kid* there and also a lot of the excellent films which the new Italy is producing. If there were no mosquito nets in Venice, Ruskin himself never enjoyed the mosaics of San Marco more than I did. Food everywhere

was abundant and marvellous, if costly. There were all those infinite, staggering works of art. In Siena there was even a whole Charlie Chaplin festival at a small movie theatre, just off that incredible and untouched Piazza. And everywhere there were people who seemed to be glad, if a little surprised to see us. We looked pretty tattered as a rule when we arrived places (the John Fredericks hat which had been so useful to conceal the dust in my hair finally expired somewhere near Florence, after too intimate contact with the goat cheese and ham which we were carrying along for a picnic lunch). But they were people who proved, all of them, also to be ardent film fans.

After Milan, Rome. Which is something, especially if one has never been there before and is exposed quickly to all of it while also undergoing a terrific case of *déjà vu* as a consequence of having previously seen that extraordinary film *The Open City*. Then over the hills—and what hills, still littered with burned-out German tanks and other impedimenta of war—to Venice where the Film Manifestation, though quite a big affair, proved to have been given a pleasantly informal air by its organisers, notably by Count Elio Zorzi who, acting as host, gave everyone present the agreeable impression of being utterly free as well as most welcome. One was very conscious too, that this international meeting was being held under a new regime and not that which under the old Biennial Festivals used to take place. Though few of the hotels in Venice and none of those on the Lido were open (they were still occupied by convalescent and other Allied officers) there were visitors galore whom one ran into constantly, on foot on their way to the Teatro San Marco to see films, dodging pigeons and beggars while discussing films at the cafés on the right hand side of the Piazza as one looks towards San Marco (for some reason the cafés on the left hand side were not considered intellectually chic), progressing by gondola towards a spot of sight-seeing or, even, in the Casino.

It seemed a pity to tear oneself away from this heavenly place in order to go to Trieste although there were several good reasons for this, including the fact that I'd got permission from the Allied Military Government to go there and a military car to go in. Rather to my own surprise I also found and got away with an armful of film posters and film stills for the Museum, much enjoyed an enormous open-air cinema there, and also fitted in an agreeable afternoon on the beach, still considerably encumbered with blocks of broken concrete and other mementoes of the war which in Trieste had the air of not being by any means quite over. No "incidents" occurred during my brief stay, though the AMG officers obligingly (and as it proved accurately) predicted one could I have stayed over until the next weekend.

It was no infidelity to Italy—most travellers agree that is the most exciting and hope-provoking country to visit in Europe today—to be glad to be back again in Paris, more beautiful in its tender autumn than ever, like the face of a beloved person one had never hoped to see, or not hoped to see unscarred, again. Now the Peace Conference had folded, but UNESCO was about to open and the town all set to celebrate the advent of its delegates. More film festivals were put on: and Laurence Olivier's "King Lear" came to rival Jean-Louis Barrault's "Hamlet" and so give

us two dazzling film-stars in two stunning stage productions in one season. By now, too, there were those green oysters, briny as Venus herself and—for the tables of the few who could afford them—windowfuls of partridge, quail, snipe, grey geese, whole deer, wild boar's heads with alarming tusks and eyeballs and—all ready to lie on their backs on toast with their claws touchingly turned up to heaven—tiny larks. Cold now, the night one groped one's way through dark streets to a showing of the much-debated, formerly banned and still unexportable *Le Corbeau*, a nervously disturbing picture made under German occupation and somewhat reminiscent of our own *These Three* with its sensational story of murder and poison-pens in a provincial town. The accounts I was given of its alleged collaborationist tie-up were so involved as to be quite obscure to an outsider: but it is a good film and one which it will be a pity if we are not to see. Cold and wet, too, the night "Les Amis de l'Art" put on a group of films about painters: Sandy Calder, whose exhibition of mobiles and stables was having a success at the Galerie Louis Carré, was there and enjoyed a big hand from the audience for a little color-film about his work. The new Leger film however got less response than a twenty minute picture about Matisse, which furnishes an extraordinary experience when it includes a slow-motion analysis of the brush strokes of the eighty-year-old master, who proudly refers to this documentary as "mon film".

Though the newer American films were apparently slow in reaching France—the Paris queues for *How Green Was My Valley* were something to behold and the "black" (which is to say "tough") movies like *Laura* and *Double Indemnity* were current table-talk everywhere—new French films which are also slow in reaching America were all there for the seeing—not least the big new Marcel Carné production *Les Portes de la Nuit* which I had watched being made earlier in the summer. Even now I find myself haunted by the composer Cosma's refrain from its charming music score, to the words of its enchanting theme-song by the poet Jacques Prévert who also wrote the script.

During the course of a sensationally good, garrulous lunch high up in the Eiffel Tower restaurant with Jean-Louis Barrault it was Prévert who told me that Sessue Hayakawa often appears in minor French movies, looking exactly as he did when he branded Fanny Ward's shoulder years ago in a famous film called *The Cheat*. This somehow tied the past nicely on to the present for me, as did also meeting Musidora, famous French film vamp of the '20's, and author of a current play about Georges Sand.

Finally, I found myself on a small, cosy cargo boat en route for New York again with several cases of "old" films and other oddments on board to swell the Museum of Modern Art's collection. The question did arise as to whether I had at least temporarily succumbed to an enthusiasm for new films: or had the experience rather restored my faith in the cinema by making me realise that, astonishing as it seems, through occupation and war and resistance and shortages of every kind, the motion picture all over Europe seems not only to have survived but to have taken on a new vitality, a new expressiveness for the new things that are now to be said?

MOVIE ACTING

By

THOMAS QUINN CURTIS

IF STAGE ACTING is a questionable art—as such reliable authorities as Gordon Craig and George Moore have assured us it is—what then of screen art? Surely it is by inference an even more dubious art and yet its occasional power, its direct appeal and its performances, which sometimes linger long in memory, are difficult to explain away.

That screen acting has almost no relation to stage acting is readily admitted and it is a curious fact that the best screen acting has been for the great part the contribution of amateurs and semi-amateurs. Training and even experience count for very little here and the non-professional oddly enough is often an easier and more convincing performer than the actor tutored in the theatre. Eisenstein's best films were acted by Russians and Mexicans who had probably never seen the inside of a theatre in their lives and the history of several worthy and celebrated actors and actresses who have attempted the cinema is a lugubrious one. Consider the melancholy celluloid remains of Duse and Bernhardt occasionally on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York or have a look at Beerbohm Tree in the movie *Macbeth* in which Tree, if judged solely by this, would appear to have been an inferior artist to the late William S. Hart, a player so preposterous that he deserted the stage for the screen as a means of escape in the halcyon road-company days of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "East Lynne".

DIFFERENT MEDIUMS

In more recent times we have had further examples of the actor from the theatre—though often excellent in the films—failing to project his stage self, due to the difference of the mediums. George Arliss in "Old English" on the stage was one thing; George Arliss in *Old English* on the screen was another. The Lunts in the motion picture of *The Guardsman* were amusing enough but it bore but a poor carbon-copy resemblance to the irresistible fun of the original play. Raimu, always a delightful player, was seen to better advantage at the Comédie Française in *Le Malade Imaginaire* than even in *The Baker's Wife*, just as Jouvett transcended any of his film work in Giraudoux's *Electra*. Or to take an English case, which was the greater performance: Olivier in the stage "Oedipus" or Olivier in the screen *Henry V*? The magic of the stage, it would seem, is rarely the magic of the screen and as their magic differs so does their material.

"The flimsiness of Rassendyl", wrote Bernard Shaw of the dramatization of "The Prisoner of Zenda", "is terribly exposed by the footlights". But on the screen flimsiness is never "terribly exposed": it is made the most of. The

movie spectator expects the improbable and welcomes the impossible, and such gaudy stuff as an Anthony Hope novel is not best interpreted by actors trained in subtleties. Thus, the Rassendyl of a Lewis Stone is superior—in that it is more convincing—than the Rassendyl of a George Alexander. The process, of course, works in reverse as well. Picture a movie star faced with "A Doll's House".

MINOR MUSIC HALL ARTIST

Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush* or even in the recent *Monsieur Verdoux*, Emil Jannings in *The Last Laugh*, *Variety* and *The Patriot*, Greta Garbo in *Love (Anna Karenina)*, *Wild Orchids* and *Camille*, Zasu Pitts in *Greed* and in *The Wedding March*—these were memorable movie performances. But what of Chaplin in the theatre? A minor music hall artist of minor reputation who—had it not been for the invention of the motion picture—would probably never have been heard of. And Jannings? A second-rate Reinhardt actor in no way comparable to Werner Kraus, Moissi or Paul Hartman, none of whom ever really gained a foothold in the films. And Garbo? A Swedish ingenue moulded by clever movie directors. And Zasu Pitts? A slap-stick comedienne who has since gone back to slap-stick. In the last twenty years countless picture actresses have come to the New York theatre to test their picture fame and all save two have failed lamentably and embarrassingly. These two—Lillian Gish who came out of the silent cinema to do Helena in Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*, and who has stayed on to our great good fortune, and Ingrid Bergman who won enormous acclaim this past season in Maxwell Anderson's "Joan of Lorraine"—were schooled for the drama before taking to Hollywood.

ACTING BY ACCIDENT

Acting in the movies might be best described as acting by accident and this is apparently understood by directors, producers and other movie engineers. As a result, the lengthy and thorough rehearsal necessary in the theatre for the performance of the feeblest farce has been eliminated and the players require little preparation. The technical skill of an actor carries little weight and therefore the beginner is often as competent as the veteran. It is the personality of the player that interests this public and not his ability to submerge his personality in any given part. That the actor consequently neither develops nor in any way varies his interpretation of the most diverse roles makes no difference. Here the movie-goer agrees with Barrie's *Maggie* in that if an actor has charm he needs nothing else and if he lacks it, it doesn't matter much what else he has.

MONSIEUR VERDOUX

The new Chaplin reviewed by

JOHN H. WINGE

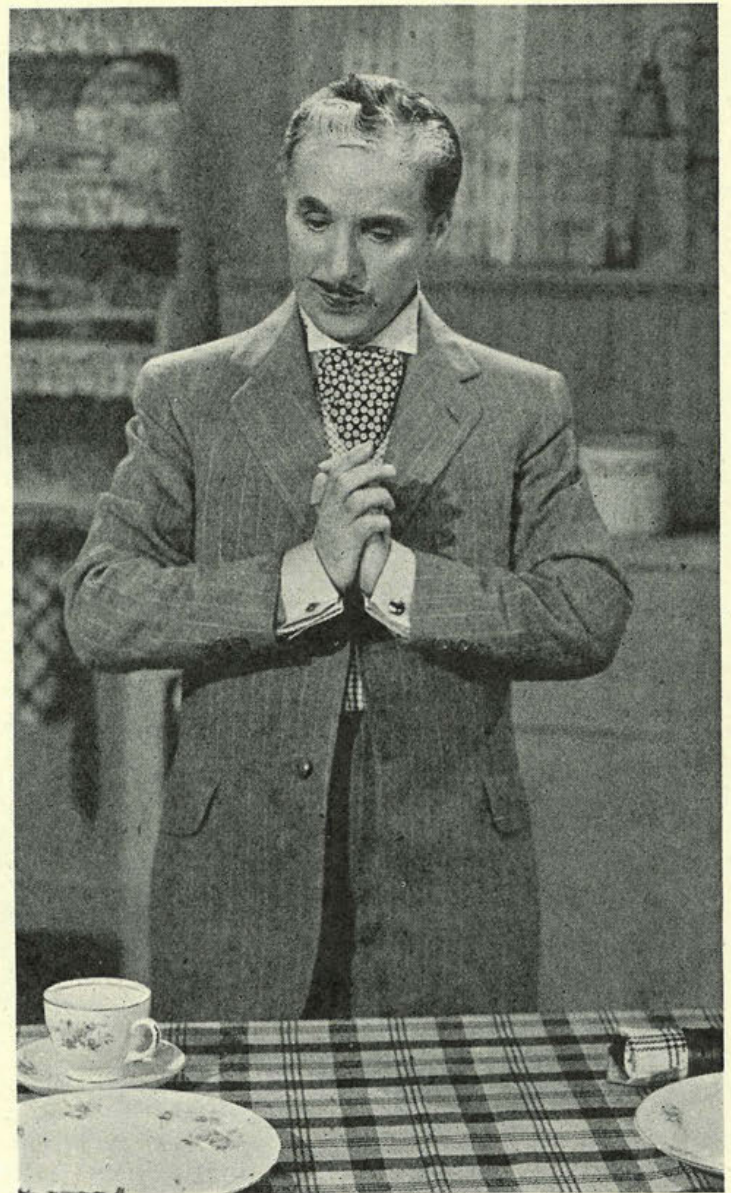
"BUSINESS IS A RUTHLESS BUSINESS", says Charles Chaplin in his new picture *Monsieur Verdoux*, and he is aiming at more than a mere play of words. Nothing less than an extremely sharp and cynical attack against the ethics of a society based on profit motives is the centre of this amazing work. Compared with the single-mindedness, the courage, the violent temper and the high, artistic level of *Monsieur Verdoux*, the classic attempts of Erich von Stroheim's look timid.

The story opens with a lament of a late M. Verdoux—a Bluebeard, a Landru—that ought to satisfy any ladies' club "crime doesn't pay". The dignified image of a peaceful cemetery with a tombstone "Henri Verdoux, 1880-1937" moves across the screen. And after this a story begins whose brutal message is summed up by the mass murderer who is troubled by just one grief: that he had not been able to do it wholesale. His fourteen murders were small business. The very smallness of the figure makes him a criminal. Had he done it on a large scale, he would have been a hero. Allusions to Hitler and Mussolini are clear enough and are supported by newsreel shots of these "successes".

But Chaplin goes much further. He commits his murders as pure business transactions. He has completely abandoned the familiar figure of the little tramp. M. Verdoux, too, is no naturalistic try to copy a "living and breathing human being right from the street", but a stylized performance done with an elegance and brilliance yet unachieved in motion picture history.

M. Verdoux is a dapper little Frenchman, a bank teller dismissed after 35 years of loyal service, a victim of one of the depressions. As a good husband and father of a child, unable to land any other job, he is compelled to go into a business of his own: he kills elderly ladies with some money in the bank, which he obtains in time by pointing out to them the general insecurity of the times and of the banks and the dangers of revolutionary expropriations. Wisely, he tries to multiply his profits by playing the stock exchange. The intimate relations to his stock broker, however, drive the unfortunate entrepreneur to still new business transactions. A drop at the stock exchange—he needs 50,000 frs. within 24 hours—he checks with his records—there is a good prospect right in a small town—check with the time table—the train takes the restless man away again—he sees his client—sells her the idea of cashing her account at once—kills her—wires the 50,000 frs.—the train takes him away again—to another prospect—to another wife.

Although M. Verdoux tries hard to keep his records straight and neat, once in a while he might slip and confuse his many names. He tries a new poison and mistakenly believes to have tasted some of it. He goes into convulsions

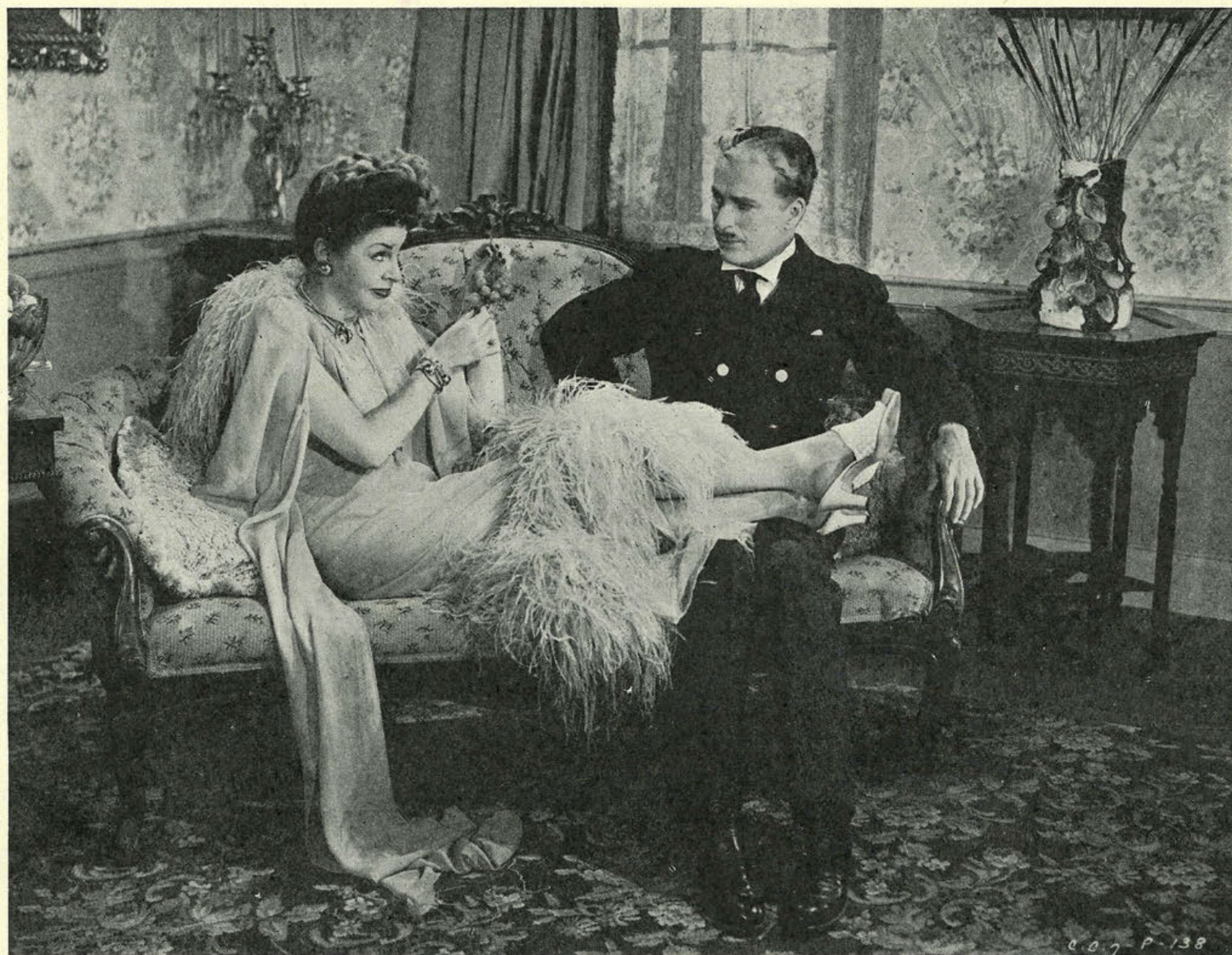


and asks one of his present wives to call his (real) wife—a small feature as touchy as it is funny. Some business transactions don't work out so well and some of his murderous attempts fail. There are quite a few slapstick scenes in this picture but they appear like interludes in a sinister and blood-drenched nightmare.

Though one never sees a murder committed, but a smooth salesman at work and his difficulties investing his income, this picture seems to make selling itself a destructive matter. He might as well sell shoes or real estate or insurance but the implications remain horrifying. "Business is a ruthless business".

The many self-accusations uttered by the elderly Verdoux shortly before his end on the guillotine are just as many accusations against a society in which he believes and which he fully accepts. Nothing is wrong with this society although it finally licks him by the means of another one of those depressions. Again no jobs, no moneyed ladies and, finally, he has to give himself up—a financial failure.

Chaplin delivers his glib and airy sales-talk with oily eloquence in a clipped, rasping voice. He masters it as supremely as he does his face and his body. In his former



Monsieur Verdoux

United Artists

pictures—almost right up to his *Great Dictator*—Chaplin used to surround himself with a cast of equally stylized characters with floating beards, bushy moustaches, Shakespearean gestures and a readiness to tumble. In *Monsieur Verdoux* only Martha Raye and a few of the minor actors help Chaplin to carry on the great tradition of American slapstick. But with good reason he had abolished all the outer characteristics of it because *Monsieur Verdoux* is not slapstick. But all the brutal sharpness of slapstick is still hidden under the thin varnish of a travelogue through the business world of murder.

Not missing, either, is the certain sentimental episode with a poor girl so typical for Chaplin pictures. Satanically, it is inserted right into one of his experiments regarding a new and improved way to kill. The girl comes back again towards the end when she as the only person at the trial is on his side so that her pity can be transmitted to the audience. This manoeuvre removes some of the feelings against the monster and lets him appear more as a victim of scheming than as guilty schemer.

Chaplin's old photographer, Roland Totheroh, has delivered a cold, almost cruelly overlighted picture, which deepens whites as well as blacks. (For "artistic supervision" signs the famed German camera artist, Curt Courant.)

The remarkable French-American Director, Robert Florey, and Wheeler Dryden helped Chaplin with the directorial chores. The story and the music—as in former pictures—are written by Chaplin. While the story is masterly (his speech at court ends with ominous words directed at a world blessed with the atomic bomb: "I'll see you soon. Very soon!"), the music sounds like gay Viennese operetta before 1914.

This report is written immediately after the world premiere and thus I have had no chance to watch for the reaction of public and press. It is safe to predict, however, that the American public will be disappointed by the scarcity of comedy scenes and repulsed by the depressing activities of the travelling salesman in murder. In addition, it has been for years impregnated with ill feelings towards Chaplin by a scandalmongering press, which never has accepted the great artist as just that. And it is no coincidence that only 30 per cent. of the income of his pictures has come from the United States but 70 per cent. from abroad. At the same time, the average Hollywood product grosses 60 per cent. in the home country and only 40 per cent. abroad. *Monsieur Verdoux* might increase this tell-tale difference even more.

CRITICISM AND OPINION

By

KENNETH L. THOMPSON

EXCLUDING THOSE WHO GO TO the cinema because of the low degree of luminosity, the thousands of filmgoers who lapse into a semi-hypnotic trance until the often welcome, sometimes disappointing, words "the end" appear on the screen, can be divided roughly into two sections. The first comprises those who sally forth to the pictures solely to be amused and entertained, to be thrilled or horrified, to laugh or cry, according to individual ideas of what constitutes enjoyment. It is common knowledge that these people, on whom the box-office depends, are in the majority and are therefore important. Then there is the small, but apparently increasing, body interested in the film out of artistic, æsthetic, educational or sociological motives or as a medium of expression. These cineastes are the film students and usually readers of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, and potential or developed film critics. Within this group alone there exists a wide divergence of opinion which may explain, in part, why many feel that the cinema possesses no concrete standards on which to base criticisms. Much depends on the viewpoint: the script-writer tends to think in terms of a shooting script while the teacher might approach a film from an educational standpoint. Towering above this is personal opinion, together with inevitable allied prejudices, pet theories and aversions, idiosyncracies and phobias—particularly prominent among the entertainment-seekers and not altogether absent from the hardened critic.

There can be no handbook of rules for the guidance of filmgoers revealing how to arrive at a decision on the worth of a film, for every critic, student, "fan" and child has his own approach and standards. Children often base their opinions on the amount of action or on the extent to which the picture makes them laugh; the "fan" usually approaches a film via the stars and the story; while the critic and student takes into account a variety of factors.

Ideally the critic should have a sound knowledge not only on the work of the multitude of studio departments concerned in film production, but also of art, literature, music, æsthetics, education, sociology, economics and finance, and judging by certain trends, of surrealism, dream interpretation, psychology, psychiatry, hydrodynamics and the Five Year Plan. In addition, the ideal critic should have the ability to alternate his moods rapidly to gain full benefit from, say, the sombreness of *Ivan the Terrible* in the afternoon and the out-of-this-world humour of the Marx Brothers in the evening. He should also speak varieties of foreign languages to glean some sense from a foreign film without sub-titles and, indeed, often from pictures seemingly blessed with such amenities.

Obviously there is no critic with such a saintly status and he must do his best within the limits of his nevertheless extensive knowledge and critical faculties, possibly with the assistance of various books of reference, one of which inevitably must be a dictionary of American slang. Films, *en masse*, cover such a wide and apparently inexhaustible array of subjects and situations, that even the critic must

rely largely on his individual reaction and the film's appeal to him.

Every filmgoer is, in effect, a critic. Having seen *Piccadilly Incident*, Mrs. Brown says to Mrs. Smith: "Oh my dear, I did enjoy that film—the tears were rolling down my cheeks . . . and isn't Michael Wilding handsome?" Emotional, story and star appeal are the main considerations to the majority and doubtless it was due largely to these factors that *Piccadilly Incident* was voted the best British film of the year by that majority. The minority, however, probably voted for a film of the calibre of *Brief Encounter*, and, undeniably, both sections are entitled to their respective opinions. There is a tendency for the film appreciation advocate to say to the not-so-highbrow film fan, "Never mind, dearie, you'll learn better in time", and for the film fan to look askance at the film appreciation advocate as head-in-the-clouds, intellectual and snobbish, passing the remark, "You're killing enjoyment and making hard work out of pleasure".

As long as both schools of thought remain on their present levels, the exhibitors will show no more preference than at present for showing an Abbott and Costello film to a *Grapes of Wrath*. When, and if, both sides make an effort to come closer together, the situation might change.

I do not wish to imply that the bulk of the serious-minded students are fanatically intellectual and will tolerate nothing short of a *Citizen Kane* or that the majority of cinemagoers are one mass of bad taste—there are, of course, exceptions on either side. Normally there is a common ground on which the film student and the film fan might well meet and there is no reason why this mutual point should not be an entertaining film with a plausible and well-developed plot, a measure of action, some underlying theme or significance, good characterisation and sound direction and acting. Such a film does not normally bring forth any excessively derogatory comments from the student and, if at the same time, it meets with the approval of the average cinemagoer, thus ensuring box-office success for the exhibitor, that common ground has been reached. Is not *Great Expectations* a case in point?

On trying to classify the various types of filmgoers who form the majority and minority elements, I arrived at the following:

(A) THE SERIOUS-MINDED (CRITIC) FILM VIEWER

1. The extremist. He has excessive admiration for the silent "classics"; considers Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Griffith the only directors of major importance; laments the coming of sound and the consequent change in technique, except in isolated cases; reads and re-reads books of an academic nature which leave him little the wiser; has a miraculous ability to read "inner meanings" and symbolism in almost every picture he sees and, if he cannot, declares the film to be of no value; looks for the worst instead of the best; has reached a definite opinion before viewing a film

and will admit no change. He is the fake, the bogus, the pretentious.

2. The specialised film viewer who does not claim to have an interest in commercial cinema as such but is concerned with the film as related to a definite subject—the doctor interested in medical films, the teacher interested in films for classroom use.

3. The specialised viewer also interested in commercial cinema—perhaps a youth club leader desirous of equipping himself with knowledge of contemporary trends in order to lead discussion or guide young people in their filmgoing.

4. The professional critic.

(a) The trade critic writing from the point of view of the exhibitor, usually judging films on their commercial (box-office) merits.

(b) The critic writing for periodicals from the readers' point of view. Thus the critic writing for a woman's journal judges a film from the woman's standpoint.

(c) The critic writing for the minority. (The reviews in SIGHT AND SOUND.)

(d) The newspaper critic writing generally. Most appear to be torn between two desires—that of reviewing films and of writing a readable, witty and amusing column.

(e) The specialised critic reviewing films of a specific nature for a specific purpose (geographical films for classroom use, etc.).

5. The film student who studies cinema as a subject in itself. He might have a particular interest in one or more aspects, but his viewpoint is wide. He has no axe to grind and his vision is not narrow or restricted. He is prepared to assimilate knowledge on film production, finance, economics, history of cinema, film technique, commercial cinema, specialised cinema, film actors, directors and technicians, documentary and non-fictional films, cinema as an art and as an entertainment, sociological importance of cinema, relationship between cinema and other arts, production-distribution-exhibition set-up, etc. He observes and afterwards forms his opinions free from bias; he looks for the best, not the worst. He is sincere, frank and thoughtful, in contrast to the extremist's intellectual snobbery.

6. The serious-minded cinemagoer who is not a student but who, with encouragement and guidance, might easily become one. He is, perhaps, one of the hopes for the future. He chooses his films carefully after reading reviews he considers reliable; is acquainted with the work of the more prominent directors and, possibly, technicians, and judges a film not only from the point of view of whether or not it is entertaining, but from its theme and presentation.

(B) THE FILM FAN: THE AVERAGE CINEMAGOER

7. The filmgoer who chooses his films by the players (the "star" fan).

8. The filmgoer who chooses his films by the nature of the story (crime, romance, comedy, etc.) as outlined in a review or in the reproduction of renter's publicity to be found in most provincial newspapers. (Without or combined with 7.)

9. The filmgoer who attends the cinema on a certain night of the week or a certain number of times per week. (Without or combined with 7 or 8, or both.)

10. The filmgoer who attends a specific cinema (or cinemas) irrespective of the film being shown. (Without or combined with 9.)

11. The chance cinemagoer who happens to be passing a cinema, perhaps when rain begins to fall, takes "pot luck"

and goes inside—especially prevalent among holidaymakers.

12. Those who go to the cinema to sleep, or for other reasons.

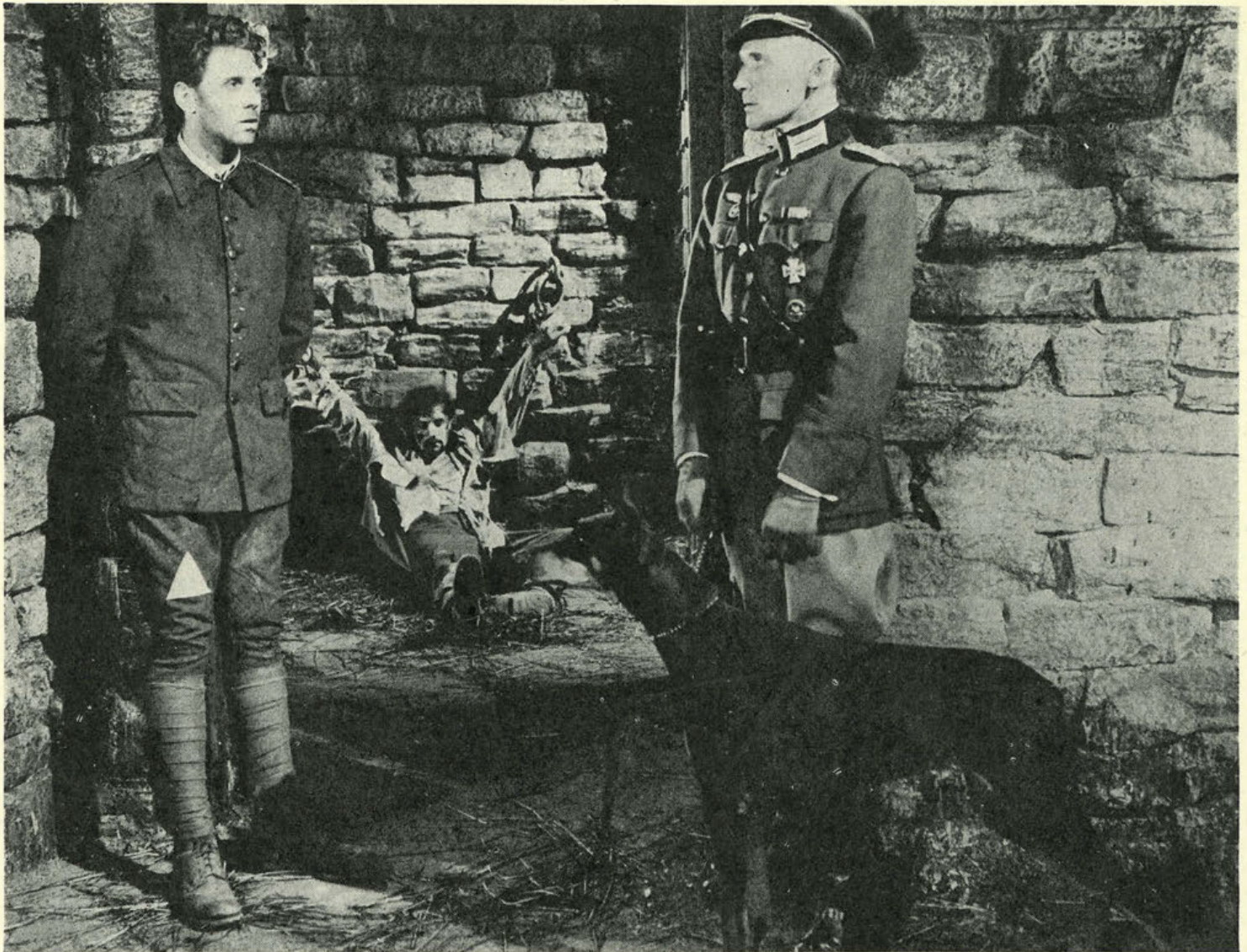
Of the "film fans", those labelled 7 and 8 constitute the majority. They will see a film because James Mason or Greer Garson is their favourite star, judging the picture according to whether or not they like their favourite in the role, alternatively according to whether or not the film makes them cry or laugh. Nothing will shake their belief that this is the extent of the cinema's function. If they do not like fantasy, they do not like *A Matter of Life and Death* (a technician's picture anyway), and, looking at it from a realistic standpoint, declare it to be "far-fetched" and therefore a film that does not meet with their approval. The same applies with the Marx Brothers. In short, a large section of the cinema-going public criticise films according to their own personal tastes, likes and dislikes, and cannot bring themselves to judge a farce as a farce or a crime drama as a crime drama. Again, many have an aversion to re-issues and do not enjoy a film solely because it is out-dated in costume. Criticism on these grounds is hardly criticism, but such factors cause filmgoers to express their dislike or the opposite, which is the final judgment of the average cinemagoer.

The main difference between the A and B groups of my sketchy categories is that the majority are interested only in the entertainment value of a film while the minority, although recognising and taking into account this value, are in search of deeper and more lasting values, particularly if interested in the artistic or cultural aspects of cinema.

But it is of no use film students "kidding themselves" that the primary consideration is not entertainment as some enthusiasts are inclined to do, particularly when first "discovering" cinema. What is needed is for the artistic or sociological film to be combined with sufficient entertainment value to make it a commercial proposition so it can be enjoyed and appreciated both by the majority and minority audiences. If this can be done, it would be easier for the minority to arouse interest in film appreciation on the part of the majority who at present have little interest in the cinema beyond its capability to thrill or amuse.

From time to time, at not infrequent intervals, come films of a high standard which arouse murmurs of approval from the student and which also possess sufficient entertainment (box-office) value to appeal to the mass of cinema-goers and give satisfaction to the exhibitor. To name a few such productions which have appeared recently: *Hue and Cry*, *Boomerang*, *Sister Kenny*, *The Killers* (honours, I think, to Woody Bredell's lighting), *Great Expectations*, and *School for Secrets*, among others. I submit that it is the well-produced film which afford the film appreciation movement an opportunity to get to grips with the cinema-goers who, with encouragement, would take a greater interest in cinema than, perhaps, at present.

There is much for which to be thankful in the appearance of such books as Dr. Manvell's "Film", the "Penguin Film Review" series, and Mr. Roy Fowler's excellent little mine of information on "The Film in France", all of which, published at a most inexpensive price accessible to any pocket, help to stimulate interest and foster appreciation of the Film, particularly among those who form the majority audience.



The Cross of Lorraine (M.G.M. 1943)

Museum of Modern Art

RECENT AMERICAN FILM WRITING

By

HAROLD LEONARD

SERIOUS AMERICAN WRITING ABOUT FILMS, usually pretty inferior to the British output, has been looking up in recent years, and during the over-all period of the war has turned out a number of fairly respectable items. Paper and other stringencies having been what they were, and are, however, I am wondering how many of these publications found their way to English readers. Eisenstein's "The Film Sense"—American by processing only—is, to my knowledge, the one reputable title to have achieved transatlantic re-publication (Faber, 1943) up to, at any rate, a recent date. Jacobs' key "Rise of the American Film" (Harcourt, Brace, 1939), while it seems to be known abroad, will have had both French and Czechoslovakian editions in the respective languages before British. On a different level, Leo Rosten's pretentious "Hollywood: the Movie Colony—the Movie Makers" (Harcourt, Brace, 1941)—which, now that the launching fanfare has subsided, comes to look more

and more like fan stuff by a Ph.D., and Deems Taylor's "Pictorial History of the Movies" (Simon and Schuster, 1943), at heart a fan item also but useful for its wealth of stills and really good index—both of these would probably have gotten English editions, or substantial English sales, in normal times. And very early in the war appeared a group of non-commercial productions which would have attracted discerning film students. The four quarterly issues of the magazine "Films" (November 1939-Winter 1940), edited by Jay Leyda, had a lively and grown-up intelligence quite unlike the cultism and/or æsthetic parochialism of previous American film journals. And in 1941 finally appeared the "Film Index", the 723-page annotated bibliography of the film in its art aspects, compiled by the New York City WPA Writers' Project with Museum of Modern Art Film Library sponsorship, under the editorship of the present writer. Carrying the Film Library's imprint also were two

excellent monographs issued the year before: "D. W. Griffith: American Film Master", by Miss Iris Barry, the Library's curator, and "Douglas Fairbanks: the Making of a Screen Character", by Alistair Cooke, special American correspondent for the B.B.C. These slender, board-bound little studies had a new combination of good looks and good scholarship. And the Alistair Cooke essay, an analysis of the growth of the immortal "Doug" from Broadway actor to movie-made character-symbol for the sum of American male virtues, showed a grasp of screen convention, a wit, and an ability to see films in easy context with the rest of current life that make a model of criticism.

Several recent enterprises mark the emergence of film writing here as institution. Not that publication suggesting the institutional has not existed before. The Film Library in the regular production of program notes to its dozen-odd film series—and in the very act of "tapping" films for inclusion in the programs—has put institutional authority behind the blocking out and elaboration of film history it has thus effected. And long before the Film Library, the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, founded in 1908, and with a record of publishing beginning soon after, has come straight down through film history keeping at the job of picking out the really important pictures, American and foreign, for a critical citation that has been aesthetically knowing and humanly adult. In the trade field, too, we can point to a phenomenon like weekly "Variety" where—its justly-famed lingo aside—a workaday newspaper of show business has been omniscient, honest, and decently forward-looking with a consistency amounting to tradition.

Moving up to date for recent instances, we get into territory incontestably institutional with the founding, some eighteen months ago, of the University of California's "Hollywood Quarterly", the film's first learned journal, now in its sixth issue plus one bibliographical supplement. University presses are a new place, too, for the production of books on a subject so upstart as films; yet it is under the best university-press imprints that a number of works of film scholarship, too specialized for the regular commercial publishing houses, will soon appear. These include Siegfried Kracauer's "From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film" and Jay Leyda's "Kino: A History of the Cinema in Russia from 1896 to the Present Day", both Princeton titles, with the Kracauer history of German film due in bookstores before this article appears. A book-length study of Shakespeare in films, under Guggenheim Foundation sponsorship, and film composer Hanns Eisler's report on his several-year-long Rockefeller-Foundation investigation of film music, are projects likely to see publication under similar auspices.

With the issuance of Gassner-Nichols' "Best Film Plays, 1943-44," followed after little more than a year by the same editors' "Best Film Plays, 1945", we reach another institutional milestone with the apparent stabilization of an annual script publishing apparatus for films, much like the Burns Mantle ten-best-of-the-year series in theatre. Single, and groups of film scripts have been published not infrequently in the past, and there have been at least five one-installment attempts at an *annual* ten-best trick for films since Robert E. Sherwood's pioneering "Best Moving Pictures of 1922-23". The current volumes are no masterworks of scholarship—the Ernest Betts-edited "Private Life of Henry VIII" and "Jew Süss" volumes of a decade ago could have suggested many an editorial nicety. And

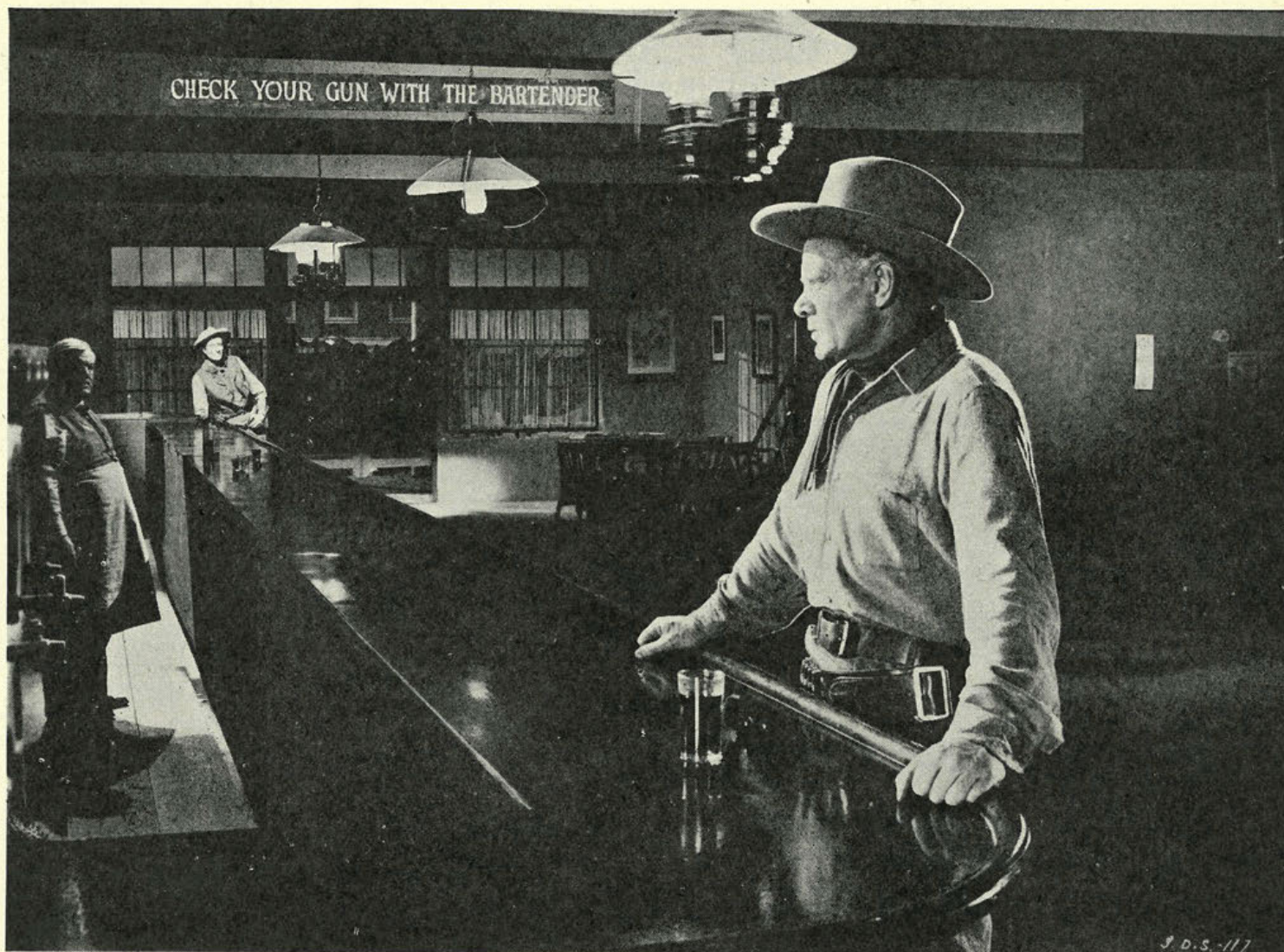
students of any film background will skip Mr. Gassner's lengthy introductions with their Johnny-come-lately-ish efforts to seem at home in the field and their oversize language. As for script form, strict shot-for-shot continuity has been eased up, out of consideration for the supposed ignorance of lay readers, into a bastard kind of playscript with fattened stage directions; the result has been a blurring of characteristic movie form. But films for inclusion have not been too badly selected; and the second book in this and many other respects is better than the first. Mainly, however, there is a second book—the real point in these matters—and there may be a third.

In the critical department there has been no good new reviewer for years, if you except Harold Clurman writing in the monthly "Tomorrow", whose highly personal column covers films as one of half-a-dozen musical and theatrical interests. For that matter, there has been little in recent serious writing about films that has been concerned essentially with individual films or film-makers at all, and the aesthetic orientation in literature has, temporarily at least, almost wholly disappeared. Experimental in-all-caps filmmaker Maya Deren has tirelessly produced articles, lectures, monographs, etc. on something nostalgically referred to as pure cinema. Aside from them, the cultist fringe of the late twenties has had no prominent publications voice. Some of the best stuff written about the movies, in fact, has been done by non-movie critics, writing in the broader context of the movie in society. At least two aspects of our movie culture have been treated by this newest group of movie-conscious writers with fresh emphasis and insight.

What interests one group is the outlook for good films and the plight in our time of the honest and original artist. Dwight Macdonald, originally a film critic, now a kind of political avantgardist, chose the terminology and laid down the main thesis for the discussion in an article "A Theory of Popular Culture", with which he opened a department specially devoted to "popular culture" in the first number of his latest magazine (Politics, February, 1944). "For about a century", wrote Macdonald,

"Western Culture has really been two cultures: the traditional kind—let us call it 'High Culture'—that is chronicled in the textbooks, and a 'Popular Culture' manufactured wholesale for the mass market".

This "popular" culture, having almost nothing in common with spontaneous folk art, still less with uncompromising *avant-garde* expression, grows big and flourishes, Macdonald maintains, not by *satisfying* popular taste but, hypocritically, by *exploiting* its worst sides. The process is also for Popular Culture to take to itself purchasable elements from the domain of High Culture (example: the wholesale absorption of talented writers by the Luce publications), effecting thereby no raising of the level of Popular Culture, but instead the corruption of those High Cultural elements absorbed. James T. Farrell, the "Studs" Lonigan novelist, who is also a prolific essayist and pamphleteer, has two long pieces about Hollywood in his recent "The League of Frightened Philistines" (Vanguard, 1946). Marxist in approach, Farrell is interested in the movies as an important aspect of the general commercialization—the cartelization—of the arts. Without the shocked dismay of writers encountering the Hollywood dilemma for the first time, Farrell describes the movies' intellectual



Duel in the Sun

Selznick-International

shoddiness, their angled story management, in terms of capitalist production economics and capitalist propaganda aims.

A different school is concerned with the movies as revelation, and uses the Freudian instrument of analysis. Alistair Cooke in the Fairbanks monograph cited earlier should be entered here, though Cooke combined with both cultural and psychological insights sturdy æsthetic criticism. Siegfried Kracauer, film critic for the "Frankfurter Zeitung", 1920-33, wrote a confidential study of Nazi propaganda films under U.S. Army and Museum of Modern Art auspices in 1942 which shrewdly identified in the films' technical devices as in their selection of material, psychological keys to their immense striking power. We shall have our best chance to examine Kracauer's method in his forthcoming "From Caligari to Hitler", significantly subtitled "a psychological history of the German film". But an advance clue to the kind of thinking we may expect from him can be gotten *via* a remarkable essay by Miss Barbara Deming describing the psychological procedure used in choosing films for preservation in our national archives ("Library of Congress Quarterly Journal",

November, 1944), many of the ideas in which, Miss Deming acknowledges, are of Dr. Kracauer's inspiration. Here we have "propaganda analysis" of a sort, but compared with the citing of propaganda content in, say, the post-World-War-I Army and Navy "service" pictures—*Annapolis Farewell*, *West Point of the Air*, *et al.*—which engaged the social-minded critics of a decade ago, Kracauer-Deming's work is less spectacular but just as telling. It is no longer the conspicuously propagandist vehicle that principally concerns today's critics but the ordinary "B" comedy, the run-of-the-mill drama (not to mention the conventional box-office giant), in which appear all those attitudes and patterns of conduct which make up the kind of life people live in the movies. We have seen this version so much that it is a shock to have Kracauer-Deming point out in picture after picture how false to the original it is—and how persistent. Sometimes, however, Kracauer-Deming carry the method further still, reversing the process and showing the movies as reflecting over-simplified states of public mind and directly accounting for many-faceted historical developments; and they seem here to be dangerously forcing their tools.

BRITISH FILMS OF THE QUARTER

Reviewed by

ARTHUR VESSELO

"BOLONEY", SAYS ANNA NEAGLE, as the sweet old lady at the end of *The Courtneys of Curzon Street*. "I think that is what they call it nowadays".

Yes, that is what they call it nowadays. In talking of films, they also sometimes call it hokum, which is perhaps slightly the more proper word. There is still plenty of hokum about in British films—good high-class hokum, much of it, decked out (as it rarely was in the old days) with skilful direction, top-level star-values, and a generally satisfying air of technical efficiency—but hokum none the less. It is as well to recognize the fact, lest we begin to take our ease too soon.

Perhaps, however, the real danger is not quite where it appears to be on first glance. The hokum-content of a film like *The Courtneys* is obvious. We know this more or less for what it is—a clever piece of box-office appeal, put together by a practised hand, according to a well-tryed sentimental formula. What are we to say, on the other hand, about a film like *The Brothers*? Because it is grim and dour, instead of being sweet and treacly, are we to say that it avoids formula and gets down to reality? Because it is filled with death and violence and leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouth, are we to say that it is not hokum? Not necessarily. Not necessarily at all. The "Cold Comfort Farm" tradition is still a hokum-tradition, however much it wears the mask of tragedy and of "nature in the raw".

In any case, the translation to the screen of such a novel as *The Brothers* is, from the ground up, a horrible mistake. On the screen, the essence of the original atmosphere, built up by descriptive words, disappears, and the whole interpretative burden is cast upon the physical action, which is further limited by the relative shortness of a film's duration. The result, in this instance, is something episodic, superficial, and sordid; and the job is finished off by irritating bursts of anticipatory music which shatter every climax.

The mistake of faulty derivation from an alien source has been made so many times that one would have thought the point clear enough by now, but quite evidently it is not. Ever since the French film-makers, before the first World War, sought dignity, prestige, and an assurance of respectable box-office returns from the adaptation to the silent screen of well-known stage-plays with well-known stage-performers, the cinema has continued, for much the same reasons, to support itself heavily upon the crutches of literature. By so doing, it makes itself not an art but the crippled sister of the arts. While it is true that not every transmogrified play or novel inevitably makes a bad film, it is also true that a genuine understanding of the differences between the media, and consequently of the differences between the novels and plays that can be successfully adapted and the many that cannot, or that present major difficulties to an adapter, has not yet grown up.

Black Narcissus is another example of an adaptation (again from a novel) which misses the mark. Again it is largely a matter of atmosphere, of shadowy values which

the film, in its excessive concreteness, fails to make real. The theme of the film is spiritual conflict—between the ineradicable paganism of a primitive Himalayan community and the Christian ideals of an invading body of nuns, newly arrived and full of good works and lofty intentions. The spirit of the place proves overwhelming; and the nuns at last retire defeated. Here is a subject so tied up with profundities and intangibles that the best of film-makers might well be cautious in grappling with it. What the film has to do is to convey the atmosphere so strongly and directly that the strange twists of the action develop naturally out of it; but what happens, instead, is that the surface action itself is left to convey the atmosphere, as best it can, by allusion and implication. The use of flashbacks to other days and scenes, and of lingering melodramatic close-ups at crucial moments, does not really help much. The film's biggest achievement is in its exterior colour-work, which has moments of splendour so impressive that they almost make the whole film worth while.

Whether there is anything at all that makes *The Man Within* worth while is a matter for some doubt. This is a curious film—a sort of introverted freak, with no apparent purpose and aimed at no clearly-defined audience. If it were a nightmare, brought to a psychiatrist by one of his patients for analysis, it could be fitted into the Freudian framework without serious difficulty. The central figure is a boy who hates his father but madly hero-worships his father's friend after the father's death; suffers from persecution-mania and finds a haven only in the arms of two women each suspected of loose morals; betrays his hero, behaves in a cowardly way, and suffers frightful remorse, but ends by redeeming himself and earning his hero's pardon. The fact that this all takes place in period-costume, against a Technicolor background of ships and smugglers ("the gentlemen") and the sea, also no doubt has a bearing on something or other—a practised psychiatrist could presumably say what.

There is no multicoloured fancy-dress business about *Temptation Harbour*, which is in the sombrest blacks and whites, and takes the line of being extremely down-to-earth. In as far as this means using the generous resources of the cinema to present us with a realistic picture of life as it is lived by poor and simple people in a big harbour-town, it is more than acceptable. In as far as it means portraying their life as something degraded and vicious—or, at the best, ignorant, weak, and utterly helpless against evil—it is merely depressing. Nor is it a valid defence to say that the film is factual and points no morals, for indeed it does appear to point a moral, which is that small-scale and hesitant wrong-doing does not pay (implying that large-scale and determined wrong-doing might).

Does this make too big an issue of the matter? Possibly—and possibly not. Every complete work of art throws light upon the artist's view of the universe. And if M. Simenon's view of the universe, as it seems to be revealed here—a

view of goodness as a feeble, rudderless craft, driven to shipwreck by every wind of ill—is at all correct, then we might as well stop making films and wait for a large-sized atom-bomb to clear the field for a new creation.

To say that *Dear Murderer* also deals with the seamy side of things is not to suggest that it is in any way in the same class as *Temptation Harbour*. This is just the old yarn about the perfect crime which does not quite come off, and it is stagily set, among stagey and exotic characters, in expensive surroundings. Within its narrow limits, it is competently done, though with more than a touch of pointless nastiness: its chief redeeming feature is Greta Gynt's performance as a highly unscrupulous siren.

Greta Gynt appears once again, though in a different kind of role, in *Take My Life*—another crime-piece, but much more plausibly and imaginatively handled. Indeed, this film, in its relatively unpretentious way, is a cut above most of the posturings and agonizings of the quarter. It has animation and originality, and one feels in the director, Ronald Neame, a measure of enthusiasm for the cinema's potentialities. Not that the film is without flaws: there is, for instance, an unlikely uniformity of accent about all the players; and it is odd to see how subtlety and triviality jog shoulders throughout the action. Of this latter defect the hurried and absurd ending, coming after long sequences of beautifully accumulated suspense, is a case in point. Still, it is a type of defect which melodrama, even at its best, finds it hard to avoid. Melodrama cunningly enough contrived to escape such pitfalls would perhaps transcend itself and finish up by being something notably more than melodrama—a sort of super-melodrama, a kind of extended flash of insight into a deeper reality than reality itself. *Take My Life* is no such startling and paradoxical phenomenon: it is simply a good, dexterously-manipulated thriller with plenty of promise; but that is certainly something, and not to be sniffed at.

At the end of the quarter, arriving just in time to be included here, is Ealing's *The Loves of Joanna Godden*, from Sheila Kaye-Smith's more austere novel, "Joanna Godden", about a beautiful and strong-minded gentlewoman farmer on Romney Marsh at the beginning of the present century. It has the usual concertina-effect of novel-into-film, with occasional flattened pieces of sub-plot squeezed in here and there, and the main action robbed of gradualness in its development by too much compression; but this scrappiness of incident and idea is offset to some extent by the appropriately gentle tempo of the sequences individually, and by the overriding attractiveness of the essential subject-matter.

Sheep-farming in England forty years ago is as good material for the screen, in its own much quieter way, as cowpunching in America, at the same or an earlier period; and the scenery of the Kentish coast is as photogenic, and can hold as much appeal, as the prairies and the deserts of the Wild West, for all their greater vastness. *Joanna Godden*, whatever its failings, has something of the flavour of *The Overlanders*, not merely because it happens to have Chips Rafferty in a small part, but for a more important reason, that there is in it a feeling for background, a sense of the quality of English country life, as in the earlier film there was a sense of the quality of life in the wider spaces of Australia.

SOME NOTES FROM RUSSIA

THE "TALKIES" ARE, we have been reminded by our newspapers, just twenty years old in the Soviet Union. It was in 1927 that in Moscow, the physicist Tager, and in Leningrad, Professor Shorin, began to have positive results in their experiments in sound-film. The leading film-directors of that time, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, were frequent visitors to their laboratories and in 1928 published their "Future of the Sound Film", which still remains one of the most penetrating and valuable studies of cinema technique ever written.

In those years the Soviet silent film had reached its apogee. 1927 saw the production of Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*, of Eisenstein's *October*, of the film by A. Room which was known in England as *Bed and Sofa*. Some of the finest historical films, a genre in which the Soviet film industry has always excelled, were made that year, such as Shrub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* and *The Great Way*.

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There were critics in 1927 who considered that the arrival of sound films would rob the art of the film of much of its value, so there are sceptical voices raised today about the consequences of adding colour and stereoscopy to the sound-film. Successes in colour such as the documentary films of the Physical Culture Festivals in Moscow and the enchanting *Stone Flower*, have silenced some of these critics, though it is widely felt in the Soviet film industry that there is no point in using colour for its own sake, some films being equally effective in black and white.

As for the stereoscopic film, the exhibition in Moscow now of *Robinson Crusoe*, for all its imperfections, points the way to a new development in the medium which, if certain practical difficulties can be overcome, may be as revolutionary as the introduction of sound twenty years ago. No one interested in the future of the cinema can ignore the implications of those birds which seem to flutter over the audiences head in the Stereoscopic cinema in Moscow Sverdlov Square.

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Looking through the biographies of leading Soviet film directors of the past twenty years or so, I was interested to notice how many of them were qualified in other professions before turning to the cinema. Pudovkin, I find, was a chemist, Dovzhenko a schoolteacher, Eisenstein an engineer, Kozintsov, Yutkevich and Kuleshov were painters, Alexandrov was a theatre electrician.

Some of these directors were quite distinguished in their previous professions and Pudovkin, who is today, I believe, preparing a scenario on a scientific theme, continues to be deeply interested in chemistry and physics. "Nature" is his favourite magazine, he told me recently. Incidentally, he is a tremendous admirer of Noel Coward whose *Brief Encounter* he has seen many times and whose *In Which We Serve*, he considers one of the best foreign films he has ever seen. In general the modern English film, in contrast to what is felt about the average Hollywood production, is held in high esteem by Soviet film directors.

OLEG LEONIDOV

THE FILM AND HUMANITY

Two book reviews by

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

From Caligari to Hitler (a Psychological History of the German Film), by Siegfried Kracauer. 361 pp. Illustrated. Princetown University.

Magic and Myth of the Movies, by Parker Tyler. 283 pp. Illustrated. Henry Holt & Co.

IT IS PERHAPS more than just an odd coincidence that these two books appeared almost simultaneously, since they both psychoanalyse the movies, the former from a socio-political standpoint, the latter from a clinically psychiatric standpoint to track down the sources of the new mythology created by Hollywood. What makes it more than a coincidence is the undeniable fact that it is almost impossible to write about the movies today without taking into account the manner in which they have reflected our time as the most popular mass art. As both a source and an influence in shaping social *mores* and as a mirror of those *mores*, the content of films has become very important, indeed, beyond even their momentary entertainment or possible esthetic values. At a time when three-quarters of the world is hungry, escapist films are a cruel mockery. Sedatives are a palliative, not a cure, and an overdose of sedatives is poisonous. That goes for stimulants, too. Hence, the value of Kracauer's book, which shows how a whole people—Germany—corrupted its cinema and was in turn corrupted by it, since both fed on each other, and the awful holocaust to which this led. To say that *Caligari*, *Siegfried*, *Kriemhild's Revenge*, *Dr. Mabuse*, *The Last Laugh*, *Variety*, *Metropolis*, etc., were primarily works of art and had nothing to do with the rise of Hitler is only partially true. Wiene, Karl Mayer, Fritz Lang, Murnau and Dupont, who made them, were all good men, which was more important even than their being artists. If Germany had never developed and nurtured a Hitler and Nazism, there would have been no necessity for probing into the German film to try to find out what was wrong with the psyche of the German people. But in the light of events this became as necessary as it is for a psychiatrist appointed by a court to determine whether a murderer is insane or not. Hitler wasn't created in a vacuum and the obverse of that is that art is not created in a vacuum either. Both reflected each other in varying degrees, as the mirror of the film was slanted, and both had their roots in the same social *milieu*. *Caligari*, *Siegfried*, etc., are still works of film art—Kracauer does not say that they are not—but he shows how they each had their place in what was to turn out to be a general pattern leading inexorably to the Second World War. This was not because their directors were the unwitting tools of higher-ups, or even because they unconsciously fell into set grooves of the mass temperament, being Germans themselves, but because they would have had to be clairvoyant to see that the German people would seize on certain folk-myth elements in these films (elements which had absolutely nothing to do with

their esthetic value as works of art) and find inspiration in them to fan latent desires into uncontrollable flames. (As far back as 1923, the French critic, Amiguet, said of *Caligari*, "It has the odour of tainted food. It leaves a taste of cinders in the mouth". This was certainly not hindsight. The favourite adjectives applied to the German film contemporary with their appearance was "macabre", "sinister", "morbid".)

HEIL, CALIGARI !

The pre-Hitler anti-authoritarian films were only loosely connected with each other and failed to carry conviction. On the contrary, films with authoritarian dispositions were closely interrelated—they concurred in establishing a national epic which centred around the "rebel" and was dominated by the figure of an inspired *Führer*—they did not have to be substantiated, as the anti-authoritarian films did. They reflected attitudes that simply existed. They were *internally invulnerable*. Part of the German intelligentsia and non-biased observers both warned the German middle-classes against National Socialism and even though the Nazis proclaimed (in 1943) that "the middle class is dead and should not rise again after the war", it was this very middle-class which formed the backbone of the Hitler movement. The impact of pro-Nazi dispositions seemed to upset all sober considerations. Thus does Kracauer describe the moral retrogression of the bulk of the German people in accepting Hitler. "Since Germany thus carried out what had been anticipated by her cinema from its very beginning, conspicuous screen characters now came true in life itself . . . filling the arena of Nazi Germany. Homunculus walked about in the flesh. Self-appointed Caligaris hypnotized innumerable Cesares into murder. Raving Mabuses committed fantastic crimes with impunity (Remember Mabuse's "I am the state!") and mad Ivans devised unheard of tortures. Along with this unholy procession, many motifs known from the screen turned into actual events. In Nuremberg, the ornamental pattern of *Siegfried* and *Kriemhild's Revenge* appeared on a gigantic scale: an ocean of flags and people artistically arranged. Souls were thoroughly manipulated so as to create an impression that the heart mediated between brain and hand. By day and night, millions of feet were marching over city streets and along highways. The blare of military bugles sounded unremittingly, and the philistines from the plush parlors felt very elated. Battles roared and victory followed victory. It was all as it had been on the screen. The dark premonitions of a final doom were also fulfilled".

A German or non-German victim of Nazism would be more inclined to agree with Kracauer's thesis than a non-victim of Nazism. I'll take the opinion of the former against the latter; their opinion has more veracity. With the best will in the world, one cannot feel another's pain. To all those who think that a sign is up again on the world, "Business as usual during alterations", after what the world has just gone through, and who cannot see Kracauer's point or who accuse him of a strictly Marxian approach to history, I need only suggest that they see the Soviet film, *The Nuremberg Trials*, with its scenes of the Dachau, Auschwitz, Oranienberg, Maidanek, etc., concentration camps and ask them if that is Marxist also. *From Caligari to Hitler* has nothing to do with Marxism or any other ism. It has only to do with humanity. As such, it is, perhaps, the greatest book on the films ever written. Certainly, I can think of no greater one, one more likely to stir up discussion and constructive argument, one more likely to set a pattern for all film thinking to come.

A NEW PATTERN

What makes Kracauer's book so important is that it sets a new pattern for analysing films, wherein the analyser approaches the film as a physician approaches a patient—not with preconceived ideas to make a case for himself, but to see what he is going to find. Kracauer's analyses of German propaganda films, in the supplement to his book, *Propaganda and the Nazi War Film*, originally issued in 1942 to serve the purposes of psychological warfare, presents for the first time a scientific method for determining the propaganda factor in films. His chapters here on *Structural Analysis*, in which he breaks down with deadly accuracy the units which go to make up the whole into even smaller units of statement and reiteration, synchronization, linkage, and cross-linkage of both individual sound and picture units, is a beautifully rational method of "sifting the chaff from the wheat", i.e., "sifting the lies from the truth". He has accomplished here a kind of film atom-smashing and in this instance the cunningly concealed lies and distortions of the Nazi film makers have dissolved in the "acid" Kracauer has prepared for them so that they are revealed for the lies and distortions that they are. It is this method which Kracauer applied to the entire history of the German film and the so-called "acid test" has hardly ever failed him. Coming to the German film as an unbiased observer ("I did not know what I would find", says Kracauer), he analysed their techniques as they were never analysed before. His chapter on *Caligari*, as exciting as the most thrilling detective story or most suspenseful film by Hitchcock, with its statement, "Technical peculiarities betray peculiarities of meaning" and subsequent elaboration, its revelation of the fair as a symbol of chaos, is the most fascinating diagnosis of a national temper through the analysis of a film that I have ever come across.

Were this method employed in analysing the Russian, British, French or American film, what might not the results show? The motion picture division of the United Nations would do well to consider the possibilities of Kracauer's epochal trail-blazing in commissioning similar research on the films of all countries. More so than any other art would the motion pictures, through such research,

reveal what they want to know—namely, "how people get that way", how they can be better understood, and how they can better understand other peoples. It is an undertaking that could not but have a salutary effect as required reading for the diplomats now shaping the world of tomorrow.

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Equally perceptive in its own way and paralleling Kracauer's monumental work in that it psychoanalyses the movies to show how unwittingly they give their sources away, said sources being the folk-myths and psyche of a people, Parker Tyler, in "Magic and Myth of the Movies" has written a clever and amusing sequel to his earlier "Hollywood Hallucination". "Things are not always what they seem", says Tyler, and "The frequently unconscious magic employed by Hollywood (is) a magic of dream creation that far transcends its literal messages." He then proceeds with devastating analyses of such American films as *Double Indemnity*, *Mildred Pierce*, *The Song of Bernadette*, etc. (tours-de-force of tracking down screen motivations to their well-springs), and concludes that even his study is a "sardonic comedy of critical hallucination" . . . "sardonic, too, is the dubious vision of Bernadette that Hollywood has stamped on the silver-dollarlike surface of its frame". A subtly humorous and freshly cogent approach to explaining how Hollywood "gets that way" and how it reflects national characteristics.

EDUCATIONAL ARGUMENT

TO THE EDITOR, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—My friend Donald Mackenzie, in your last issue, attributes to me, by name, a "fallacious" generalization, viz., that producers of educational films do not consult teachers. But as he does not even take the trouble to quote chapter and verse in support of his assertion, he cannot expect me to waste my time in rebutting it.

The argument in his letter is itself so fallacious, that I am surprised to see such inexpert salesmanship in a journal read by so many critical and intelligent educational "consumers". First, he implies that an "educational film company would hesitate to risk spending hundreds of pounds on a film" when he knows as well as anyone else that the whole film industry has been built up by risking not hundreds, but millions, on highly speculative productions. Second he identifies "the consumer" with "carefully selected members of the profession", thereby committing an elementary error of sampling. Third he implies that educational films should be judged by the policy and experience of the producer rather than by its success in the classroom. And here the figures speak for themselves. Donald Mackenzie knows perfectly well that tens of thousands of pounds were lost on educational film production before the war. All credit to the pioneers who risked and lost this money, for their hardihood. But the fact is that the "consumer" did not, in general, bite. Surely Donald Mackenzie has sufficient experience as a salesman to know that you don't sell your wares by attacking your customer's judgment. Therefore it is to the production policy that he should look for the cause of the failure.

However elaborate the recipe, the proof of the pudding is in the eating—even if the entire teaching profession were enlisted as an array of chefs.

It is not for me to teach the Mackenzies their job. In my view the whole future success of Visual Education depends on research, but by "research" I don't mean what they mean.

Yours faithfully,

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THE CONCEPT OF A VISUAL UNIT

By

D. GEORGE BENNELL

THE TERM "VISUAL UNIT" has received a fair amount of publicity of late, and many a teacher can now regard its contents on paper with equanimity. But he may well receive a shock one day, when, having ordered a visual unit for the teaching of some subject, he receives a box the size of a cabin trunk, and finds therein one large can containing a three-reel sound film, eight or nine smaller cans of silent films, a dozen little boxes of film-strips, a set of lantern slides, a roll of wall charts and a handful of photographs, a packet of pictures for his episcopes, a phial of pond water for use in his microprojector, fifty copies of a booklet for the children and, for himself, a 200-page handbook. He may remember his own boyhood and, if he is enthusiastic, regard it all as a super-Meccano set—or he may renounce visual education on the spot. This, however, would be a mistake, because there is a great deal more in visual education than the mere use of a lot of visual material. Without going into detail, it may be said that "visual" is the style of education of the rest of the century, just as the "three R's" was of the last. Education moves with the times, and now at last it essays to reach those children whose ability in the use of words is not great. Visual methods by no means dispense with words; words are precious things and the expression of thoughts in words is, and must remain, the chief mode of communication between individuals, even in an age when media for mass communication may become largely visual.

What, then, for the benefit of those who are unacquainted with the term, is a visual unit? And for those who may be somewhat mistrustful of its value and use, why is it considered necessary and why should so much trouble have been taken to organise the production of films, filmstrips, etc.?

A visual unit is simply a collection of material to aid the exposition of a subject; it will rarely, if ever, contain all the items mentioned above. Each component is included because of its suitability for its purpose and is related to every other component. To take a crude illustration: for explaining to a large class what an egg whisk *is*, pictures provide the best medium, but to explain what an egg whisk *does* requires a ciné film.

The origin of the term "visual unit" is not easy to trace, and several people lay modest claim to it. In 1945, the Ministry of Education sponsored an experiment in the production of films for showing teachers the value of the "project method" in local study and in the course of production this developed into a visual unit. But before this the Admiralty had been using collections of still and ciné material, and had, in fact, adopted the term "visual units" for them. Perhaps readers can assist the research into its origins.

One thing is quite clear: the concept of the visual unit emerged as a result of the clash between the blackboard and the ciné screen. For decades, the blackboard held sway, assisted by occasional "class pictures" (to save the teacher time in drawing detailed pictures or maps on the board). Along came films, with great potentialities. Films could depict movement, they could bring the outer world into the classroom. But then the "roving camera" added the travelogue—often little more than a series of still pictures on ciné film which, by taking advantage of the novelty of the new medium, ousted the lantern lecture from its rightful place in the lecture hall. At the same time, the lecturers themselves, like Vicars of Bray, also moved into the new medium, and, with the advent of sound, proceeded to give their lectures by means of a film commentary.

In this way all professionally made educational films became mere lectures, until the documentary movement introduced its "creative interpretation". Documentary did and is doing a good job for adults, but on the whole is not particularly suited to children. Children are spontaneously creative; they will "create" a castle out of a few pieces of wood, or a submarine out of the bed clothes; they "create" what their elders call noise and chaos, but which is, in fact, their own spontaneous interpretation of life. They do not want to be *told* anything, except in answer to their questioning.

THE LIMITATIONS OF FILMS

The proof of these remarks is found in the difficulties experienced by teachers in making use of films in their classrooms. Films appeared to be of use and many experiments were carried out to confirm their value, but the teachers were not happy. The results of the experiments were often invalidated by the neglect of various factors, such as the novelty of the film medium. In short, films attempted too much, that is, they gave comprehensive lectures.

Now in a lecture, as in a book, it is permissible, and often highly desirable, to branch off into byways, to pause to weigh evidence, to study broader aspects and to examine detail: the lecturer or the writer can gather up all his threads when he chooses and continue with his main argument or conclude with a well-rounded peroration. But all such verbal techniques are inappropriate to films, not from any weakness of the medium but merely because of its artistic limitations.

Here, then, is the first stage in the expansion of a film into a visual unit. The whole of a subject cannot successfully be dealt with in one film, therefore several films are needed. The main film will present the broader aspects of the subject, while the others will deal with some of the necessary detail or digress into closely related matters. Here, too, there appears at least a partial solution of the

sound-versus-silent controversy. The broader aspects of a topic may well be presented by an outside speaker as by a visiting lecturer in an "illustrated talk", or better, by the use of synchronised natural sound and conversation, with occasional commentary; but the examination of detail certainly does not need natural sound and may be done more successfully by allowing the eye to be unimpeded by the ear as in a silent film; at most a few remarks in the familiar tones of the teacher's voice are sufficient. And so the backbone of the visual unit is a sound film with a number of silent films for its ribs.

FILMSTRIPS AND LANTERN SLIDES

But how often does the audience think: "Oh, stop the picture, I want to look at that a bit longer"? In other words, the examination of detail at times requires a still picture. And how about all those parts of a subject which do not actually move? To put them on the ciné screen has exercised the minds of the directors and cameramen, and very good jobs they have made of them at times, but their craft in this respect is justified only when, as in a cinema, there is no alternative to the ciné film. In the classroom stands the blackboard, the old symbol of visual media; why put into a ciné film that which can be shown better on the blackboard? A very sound remark, educationally, but a teacher cannot be expected to do such a good job as a good artist or photographer, and his blackboard, too, is a little primitive. Let us use the artist or photographer, but let him produce still pictures and put them on lantern slides or filmstrips so that they can be presented on the screen in the same way as the ciné films and yet admit of a longer scrutiny.

This, however, is by no means the only use of lantern slides and filmstrips. One has but to look at a child's comic paper to find stories told in pictures, or to look back some thirty years to the days of the child's magic lantern to find picture stories projected on to the screen. Some, like "Sindbad", were accompanied by a little booklet which gave the "commentary". Others told their story entirely by the means of pictures: there was no mistaking the wolves chasing the sled, the sacrifice of one of the horses, and the ultimate rescue just when (one supposed) the last bullet had been fired. Immediately there were stories told by picture and caption. So it is with filmstrips; they can perform any of these lanternslide functions. A filmstrip may be simply a collection of still pictures—it may, for instance, consist only of stills from the film, to permit of further study—or it may tell a story of its own, that is, it may give a visual exposition of a theme. The story may involve static material such as houses and people to which the strip provides a pictorial accompaniment: on the other hand, the "story" of a process or argument may be told with complete visual continuity, entirely by picture and caption. It is difficult, and by no means altogether desirable, to tell such a "story" with the entire absence of words.

A film strip and a set of lantern slides fulfil similar functions. The choice between them lies in their use. If the pictures tell some kind of story, that is, if they are linked in a sequence either by the visual continuity or by a logical order or argument, then the order of showing is pre-

determined and they are best put on a celluloid filmstrip. If, however, the pictures are merely collected together or if there are several equally good ways of arranging them, then they are best left as separate slides. It has been advocated, quite wisely, that filmstrips made from this type of material should be cut up into their constituent pictures and that these should be mounted between pieces of glass of suitable size (the recommended dimensions are 2 in. by 2 in.) and used as a set of slides.

LEARNING VERSUS LECTURING

At this point it may be well to recall (as is permissible in a verbal medium) what was said about lecturing. A lecture is an excellent affair in its way, but it has only a minor place in the classroom. Even when a teacher is giving a talk, as at times he must, he brings the class into his discussion, that is, he talks *with* the children rather than *to* them. The function of the sound film is not to give a lecture but rather to provide a sensation by picture and sound of an aspect of the world's work. By so doing it will provide the basis of an experience shared by teacher and children alike, from which they can develop their studies. The silent films are used as answers to the questions which would naturally be asked about some of the aspects of the subject depicted in the sound film; the filmstrips answer further questions. None of these media gives a lecture; none of them tells anything except in answer to questions. The sound film says in effect: "Let's have a look at this", and it is one of the tasks of the teacher to lead his pupils to the point where he can appropriately make this remark before he shows them the film. Afterwards he helps to sort out the children's questions and steers the discussion to the point when the first silent film is needed. And so with the other films and filmstrips, each of which carried the quest for knowledge a stage further.

It may be noted here that the advice of a teacher who understands the needs and reactions of children of the intended age group is as essential to the making of a visual unit as is the advice of the subject expert. In the past, a number of films have been made with the assistance of a subject expert, but very few have felt the influence of a teacher of young children. As a result, there is, so far, a number of films which are suitable for Sixth forms but very few which are of any use at all to juniors and seniors. Pioneer work has been done by teachers, particularly by the Scottish Educational Film Association and by Dartington Hall. Now the Ministry of Education is making visual units which will be judged according to their success in correlating the media of which they consist.

So much for projected material with two exceptions. Original materials, such as drawings, prints, coins and stamps, necessitate the use of the episcope, while microscope slides and "live tank", the special concern of the biologist, require the microprojector and lantern.

Surely, the teacher may ask, this completes the list of suitable material; surely the subject has been broken down sufficiently by now—from a general introduction given by the sound film through the portrayal of sidelines by silent films to the answering of questions of detail by means of filmstrips and slides?

There has been, certainly, a posing and answering of questions, and in the very asking there has been manifested the beginning of that activity on the part of the children which is essential to learning. Films alone are too passive; children learn by doing. Children like learning, but they don't like being told. They like seeing things, they like asking questions, they like action. They have seen the "shows" of projected material; they have asked their questions and had their answers; what now can they *do*?

Putting aside the question of class activity, *i.e.*, original work in notebook, workshop or garden, which, though essential, is not our present concern, there remain more questions—questions of detail—that need closer study. The films, filmstrips and slides were seen for a second, for a minute, and are gone; closer study requires material that is available for hours, days, weeks even. And as the modern tendency is for group, rather than individual study, we may leave such instruments as the Moviola, by which a ciné film may be viewed by a single person and the "individual viewer" for filmstrip. On the other hand, the "stereoscopic viewer", through which specially-prepared pictures can be seen three dimensionally, is useful because as yet there is no practicable method of projecting stereoscopic pictures in the classroom.

MATERIAL FOR GROUP STUDY

What kind of material then is suitable for intermittent or prolonged study? Clearly it must be capable of being conveniently housed in the classroom—on blackboards, walls, tables or floor, or hanging from the ceiling. Therefore, it incorporates class pictures (for the blackboard, when the "group" consists of the whole class); wall charts and photographs (pinned on the wall); three dimensional models and real objects (which will rest on tables or floor, or hang from the ceiling, according to their nature); and books.

All this is known as "display" or "study" material. (It is also called "static", a term which, being opposed to "dynamic" or "kinetic", is, in fact, most unsuitable.) Models are replicas of buildings, landscapes, towns, industrial plant, etc. These not only provide an experience which could not otherwise (*i.e.*, by an actual visit) be gained by the children, but also, by giving, as it were, a bird's-eye view, enable the viewer to obtain a mental perspective of the whole scene and of the inter-relation of its component parts. Moreover, because the children are walking about instead of sitting still, and are able to handle or, at worst point to, the models, an opportunity is provided for them to make their own active contribution to their study. Photographs, diagrams and pictures relating to the model have an obvious exponential value, and in a properly-designed display would be exhibited nearby in an appropriate position.

Class pictures are now becoming out of date, for their proper function of showing an expert drawing (instead of a blackboard sketch) to a whole class is now being taken over by filmstrips, slides and wall charts. A wall chart, however, is a poem in itself. Perhaps it is as well to emphasise the fact that any picture or diagram hung on a wall does not constitute a wall chart. The accent is on the

word "chart", signifying a map or guide. It is a carefully built-up visual guide to some process or situation. It may be a collection of inter-related pictures or diagrams, or it may be a "flow-chart" in which stages in a process or "story" are followed in a prescribed order. There may, of course, be captions—there is no need for it to be entirely pictorial—but these should be brief and informative. Anything approaching a verbal dissertation is reserved for the last items of the study material, namely, books. These range from study booklets—one for each pupil, containing, for the inquirer, answers to all the questions he is likely to ask—to works of reference, including on the library shelves the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The study booklets present most of their information in visual form, but with as much letterpress as is needful; the other books would not be included in the visual unit, for they constitute library material and are for the edification of those who are more gifted with verbal abilities.

Finally, for the teacher, there is the Handbook. This is his textbook describing in the words he so dearly—and rightly—loves, the principles and practice of the subject, and a description of the functions of the various parts of the visual unit. Up-to-date and labour-saving yet by no means a "potted lesson", it provides him with the verbal counterpart of the visual material in the "unit".

CONCLUSION

This, then, is the concept of the visual unit: it is a collection of visual material placed at the disposal of the teacher. Present-day teachers have spent all too many of their leisure hours searching high and low for pictures with which to illustrate their lessons, knowing that one picture is worth a thousand words. At last, perhaps, this burden (for it is that, even though it be of love) is to be lightened. At last, perhaps, the teacher is to be presented with all the pictures he needs, pictures of all kinds—moving, still, three dimensional—from which he may select what he requires in order to give his lessons. He is provided, as it were, with a set of carpenter's tools, from which he may choose those which are suited to the job. For a simple lesson, or to illustrate a single point, he may need but a few pictures, while for a general audience a broad, interest film may suffice. On the other hand, for a comprehensive study of a subject he may need all the components of a large visual unit.

There is one great difference, however, between the set of carpenter's tools and the parts of a visual unit. The former is a general set of instruments, suitable for tackling any woodwork job, while the latter is a selected kit carefully planned for its purpose. Teachers will need to learn how to use these new tools of the new teaching. The new teaching aims at providing an adequate education for every child according to his age, ability and aptitude; this requires new methods, visual methods. The visual unit has yet to stand the test of experience, but it has got to be tried and tried whole-heartedly, for it is clear that only by making full use of all the most modern equipment can the great modern aim of education be achieved.

THE GERMAN FILM INSTITUTE

By

G. BUCKLAND SMITH

THE HOUSE, No. 116, in Rothenbaumchaussee, Hamburg, has had an interesting history. Originally built as a town dwelling of a wealthy Jew, it passed into the hands of a subsidiary company of Ufa, and then was requisitioned by the city authorities at the beginning of the war and used as a store for the furniture of bombed-out citizens of Hamburg. It stands among ruins but itself was only slightly damaged during the raids. Towards the end of 1945 it came into its own again, and is now, perhaps, unique among the buildings of Europe.

Because of its central position in Hamburg, its proximity to the broadcasting studios, and the fact that its occupation would turn no people out to join the many thousands of homeless in Germany, it was requisitioned to form the offices of the Broadcasts and Teaching Aids Sub-Section of Education Branch of the Control Commission for Germany (British Element). Now, on three floors are the film vaults, projection and dark-rooms, offices, etc., of the Film Institute for the British Zone of Germany, while on the top floor are the offices and a studio of the School Broadcasting Section of the North West German Radio.

The Film Institute, or to give it its proper name, the Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht (F.W.U.), is essentially an agency for the production and distribution to schools and other educational institutions of films, lantern slides, gramophone records, and other teaching aids. It distributes its productions through the regional film libraries, of which there are six in the British Zone of Germany, to the 200 local film libraries in direct touch with the schools. Another section of the Institute is at Höckelheim, a small village among the foothills of the Harz Mountains, and includes a production unit for university films, a production unit engaged on research, and a technical department dealing with the development of school apparatus.

SITUATION

The situation in Germany at the time of the capitulation in the field of visual aids (as in many other fields), was chaotic. In the British Zone, about half the schools had lost their projection apparatus through bombing or looting. Many of the local film libraries, or Bildstellen, were destroyed, looted, or were surrendered to the army units on the spot. The central organisation, the R.W.U. (see previous articles in SIGHT AND SOUND) in Berlin had been abandoned and its staff and much of its equipment and film material was wandering across Germany seeking new havens of refuge. Above all, the whole school system of Germany, of which the visual aid organisation was an integral part, was shattered and the decrees and regulations upon which it had been built up were rendered invalid.

The task was enormous: to build up from almost nothing an organisation for the production and distribution of teaching aids, bearing in mind the urgency of getting material into the schools to help the harassed teachers coping with large classes in ill-furnished classrooms, short of paper, chalk, books, maps and all other essentials to teaching, and yet conforming to the new principles which we wished to implant in the educational system of Germany.

Soon after the capitulation, all the films in general circulation to schools were reviewed and lists sent out of those approved for future use. At the same time, instructions were given to the German educational authorities to retain the regional and local film libraries as undertakings of the local education authorities.

Instructions were also issued for the surrender of all films, lantern slides, gramophone records, etc., which were not approved for further use or which did not conform to the principles of denazification and demilitarisation of the Allied Forces. Many of these films, etc., were found to be quite harmless except for the inclusion of a Hitler salute or a Swastika flag and it was decided to re-edit these films and re-issue them to schools under new titles. For this main purpose, a German staff was built up in Hamburg, consisting mostly of ex-employees of the former R.W.U. in Berlin, and they were permitted to use certain equipment and funds of the R.W.U. which had been found in the British Zone of Germany. This body comprises the Institut für Film und Bild and it will shortly be put on a proper legal footing as a non-profit-making limited liability company set up jointly by the educational authorities of the Länder in the British Zone. It is governed by a Kuratorium consisting of representatives of the four educational Ministries, and has an advisory council comprising the directors of the six regional film libraries.

For the first year of its existence, the F.W.U. was financed by the continuation of the Lernmittelbeitrag, the compulsory levy of 80 Pfg. on each school child instituted under the decree of 1934. This Lernmittelbeitrag has never been popular with the Control Commission and it was discontinued in the British Zone in March, i.e., at the end of the last financial year. After that the expenses of the F.W.U., which are estimated at some 2,000,000 Reichsmark for the financial year 1947-48, have been borne on the Zonal budget. Even this solution is a temporary one which it is hoped to alter during the course of the year.

Many teaching aids, and especially films and broadcasts, cannot be marketed on a commercial basis; their production needs the subsidy of State resources. But the actual provision of film copies, or of film and radio apparatus, is a burden which could and should be placed on the local authorities. The present budget of the F.W.U. contains a large sum for the printing of film copies and for the purchase and distribution of apparatus, and it is this sum which it is hoped to transfer to or at least recover from the

local school authorities. The set-up will then be that the F.W.U. makes or commissions the making of visual aids, using Zonal funds, while the provision of apparatus and film copies, etc., will be undertaken by the Bildstellen, the regional and local film libraries, supported entirely by the school authorities. To complete the organisation and to put the F.W.U. in touch with the criticism and the wishes of the teachers, associations of teachers interested in visual aids will be encouraged, based on the Bildstellen and culminating in a council whose weight will have considerable influence on the policy and the productions of the F.W.U. This council, it is hoped, will work in very close contact with the committee which already exists in embryo to represent the view of the teaching profession to the producers of school broadcasts. These teacher organisations will also undertake research into classroom methods, the training of teachers, and other tasks necessary for the furtherance of the use of visual and audio aids in education.

Of the 70 or so films condemned in the initial censoring, over 13,000 copies have so far been surrendered and there are many more yet to come in. Twenty-nine of these films have been re-cut and re-titled and 1,200 copies are nearly ready for re-distribution to the schools.

From the material found in various deposits in the Zone, it has been possible to arrange a distribution of 2,300 film copies to the local libraries. They are all new copies and are part of the R.W.U. stores which eventually reached the British Zone during the capitulation.

There were many unfinished films "on the stock" at the end of the war and efforts are being made to get at the negatives so that they might be completed and distributed. One such film, *The Honey Bee*, is at present being copied. It is a 2-reel silent film and is very good; a copy will soon be available for exhibition in Britain.

An entirely new, film *The Cultivation of Moorland*, has been finished and is now being copied. It shows the winning of agricultural land at Wiesmoor and the use of the excavated peat as fuel for a power station, the condenser water of which is used as heat for several acres of glass-houses from which fertile soil is taken to "dress" the sterile land uncovered during the peat excavation.

Another film, *Salt Mining*, is in production and a documentary is being cut from the film material shot by the 1937 Nanga Parbat expedition. The 18 films scheduled for production within the next few months include *Safety First*, *The Colorado Beetle*, *Circulation of the Blood*, *The Production of Serum (Diphtheria)*, *Land Reclamation*, and a film on the training of dogs to lead the blind.

For universities, adult education centres, etc., a lending library of films is being built up which already contains several hundred copies. Two new surgical films have been produced and several more are on the way. Many negatives of surgical, physical and other scientific films have been discovered, and it is hoped to be able to cut new versions for educational distribution.

In the production of diapositives, it was necessary to make an entirely fresh start, because all the material and the equipment of the R.W.U. finished up in the Russian Zone. However, contact has been made with over 500 photographers, museums, scientific institutions, and Art Galleries, and already a large collection of valuable prints and negatives has been built up from which material has been selected to make 16 complete lantern slide series,

including such titles as *Luneburg Heath*, *Cabbage White Butterfly*, *Crystals*, *Catkins*, *The Woodpecker*, *Albrecht Dürer*, *Käthe Kollwitz*, and *Barlach*. Another 30 series are in production, including slides to be used in conjunction with the films, *Cultivation of Moorland*, *Safety First*, etc.

Over 2,000 gramophone records have already been distributed and it is hoped that the number will be stepped up to some 5,000 a month as soon as the present fuel crisis is over. The F.W.U. has already made a start with new recordings, of which eight have already been made, and has concluded an agreement with the North West German Radio to transfer some of its large collection of tape recordings to wax for distribution to the schools.

The production of projection apparatus has naturally been very small because of the shortage of materials and power, but in the past year the Institute has been successful in distributing 70 sub-standard projectors and ten still projectors, as well as some 8,000 Rm. worth of spare parts for the repair of those machines already in the schools. Two firms are actively engaged on the manufacture of broadcast receivers for use in schools and it is hoped to have at least 2,000 distributed by the end of 1947. Also being planned are a loop film attachment and a school equipment for playing tape recordings.

On the top floor of the building above the premises of the Film Institute work the staff of Nordwestdeutscher Schulfunk. School Broadcasts, as they are known in Britain, were an innovation to Germany, but they are proving very popular in those schools fortunate enough to have retained or salvaged a radio receiver. Up to date over 1,500 broadcasts have been made to a known listening circle of 6,000 schools. Four broadcasts of 10, 15, 20 and 30 minutes respectively are given each morning and repeated in the afternoon. The programmes are planned on a half-year basis and programme sheets are sent to each of the 14,000 schools in the Zone. Handbooks are published for teachers' use with the broadcasts and, so far, 19 such handbooks have been distributed in editions of 5-12,000 copies.

Another new development planned is a teachers' periodical to be published monthly beginning in May of this year and dealing with the classroom use of school films and broadcasts. It will not be an official organ of either the Film Institute or the School Broadcast organisation although, naturally, it will carry information of their activities.

Ambitious plans have been made for the development of teaching aids in Germany this year, especially for the import of material dealing with the geography and the lives of the people of other countries. Already plans are complete for series of broadcasts based on recordings made in Britain and Canada, and it is planned to import picture and film material from Britain, the U.S.A., Holland, Denmark, Canada, Australia, India, and South Africa. The films will be dubbed in Hamburg and distributed through the F.W.U. to schools, universities, youth groups, adult education centres and other interested bodies.

It is exciting and creative work, not only for the Germans, but also for those few British whose job it has been to get it going and for the many who have so readily given of their assistance and advice.



Duel in the Sun

Selznick International

GOING TO THE CINEMA

A Book Review by MARY FIELD

Going to the Cinema, by Andrew Buchanan. (Phoenix House, 7s. 6d.)

Andrew Buchanan's interesting small book, "Going to the Cinema", conforms with the now generally accepted principle that to improve the quality of films it is necessary to raise the standards of film criticism and film appreciation among audiences.

The book is addressed to adolescents and no doubt will be useful to the many groups for film appreciation that are in course of being developed in Youth Clubs of all kinds. With this type of reader in view, Mr. Buchanan starts by analysing the reasons why people go to the cinema, and proceeds to prove that greater and more lasting pleasure can be got from a visit to the "flicks" if the film-goer has some idea of the work that lies behind the pictures that form his evening's programme. With this highly practical end in view, the author proceeds to explain the principles behind the various items of the cinema programme, not forgetting a reference to the projectionist, on the quality of whose work depends so much of the evening's pleasure. Feature, documentary, newsreel and cartoon are all dissected in turn, and Mr. Buchanan contributes also a chapter on non-theatrical exhibition, children's entertainment films and on national types of film.

The language is simple and not too technical, all essential film terms being explained and unnecessary, though picturesque, argot avoided. As an over-all picture of film production, explained to the layman, the chapter on feature production could hardly be bettered. Naturally, from such an author one expects emphasis on editing, and it is satisfactory to have this important section of film production given its proper importance. Probably no one knows better than Mr. Buchanan the problems of editing for commentary, and his exposition of this branch of cinema craft is particularly happy.

It is rather surprising to find instructional film making, in which this country excelled before the documentary was invented, treated as a kind of off-shoot of documentary film making, when actually the reverse would be more true; though, in fact, these two branches of production call for completely different technique and methods of approach. When, too, the author speaks of "the development of the screen for educational purposes by the Ministry of Education", he seems to be deliberately subscribing to the new myth that educational and training films were invented by government departments during and since the last war. In fact, in spite of the inertia of ministries, British educational films were world famous long before 1939, although the recent tardy

efforts of the Government to introduce them to our schools will be welcomed by all.

There is, too, no differentiation, in the chapter on cartoons, between the principle of production of the cartoon and of the diagram film, and diagrams appear to be viewed by the author as an adjunct to documentary and not as a special branch of film making. No reference at all is made to the all-diagram picture, which is most successful when it is not based on accepted static types of drawing.

It is odd, too, to read so much about *March of Time* and nothing of its British counterpart, *This Modern Age*. Scant place too is given to that essential technician, the laboratory worker. The illustrations, though interesting, are sometimes not sufficiently informative to the untrained eye.

In spite of these deficiencies, and one or two other points on which film experts might enjoy a profitable and pleasurable argument with the author, the book remains a well balanced and reliable guide for the young person, and indeed for the adult who wishes to improve his knowledge, and in this his judgment of the craft of film production. Mr. Buchanan rightly points out that film making, though a magnificent job of technical teamwork, seldom reaches the level of an art.

CORRESPONDENCE

"Instruments of the Orchestra"

The Editor, Sight and Sound

Sir,—I have read with great interest Mr. Keller's review of the Crown Film Unit's *Instruments of the Orchestra* in your Spring issue. I had the privilege of recording the sound track for the film, and naturally his paragraphs on the score of poor sound affected me a good deal. I also have seen the film at the Curzon Cinema and must agree that his remarks are absolutely correct. But, in defence, I must reply that the sound track appears to have given satisfaction to everybody when it has been reproduced under correct conditions. My personal feeling is that, had the operator at the Curzon taken the trouble to play the film at a higher level, Mr. Keller would not have been so disappointed.

This raises the whole subject of sound projection in the commercial cinema. Generally speaking, projectionists do use a certain amount of intelligence in their handling of feature films, but this courtesy is scarcely ever extended to what is so often contemptuously described as the "short" or the "fill-up". The documentary film, which so often must come into this category, frequently depends for its effect on the sound track, even more than does the full length feature. For instance, the narration on a commentary film should sound louder to the audience than the average dialogue recorded synchronously with the picture.

It is not generally realised that the level of the sound, as heard by the audience, is purely a function of the setting of the theatre volume control. Nothing that the recordist, the producer or the laboratory can do can make the slightest difference. There can be no standardisation until the exhibitors and the manufacturers get together to achieve it.

The sound track recorded upon film, or any other medium for that matter, has its limitations. Its available volume range from maximum to surface noise is confined within a comparatively narrow band—a band quite adequate for normal dialogue and accompanying music, but far too narrow for the sound of a full symphony orchestra ranging from a solo flute to a fortissimo tutti. The recordist therefore has two alternatives. First, he may compress the range and fill his track throughout to a reasonable maximum, knowing that at least the overall theatre sound will not be lower than the accompanying programme, but knowing also that the full orchestra will make little more physical noise than, say, the woodwind section. Or he may give the music the benefit of the range he has available, in this case knowing that it will sound all right in the very occasional cinema with good equipment and staff who know how to use it, but will sound hopelessly feeble in all the others. This is a very difficult problem, particularly in the case of a film like *Instruments of the Orchestra*. I chose the latter course and I do not regret it in spite of the rather drastic remarks of Mr. Shawe-Taylor and Mr. Keller.

I have gone into this explanation at some length, not entirely to try to shift the responsibility for an indifferent performance on to other shoulders, but in the hope that readers will realise how very much the effect of a film, both sound and picture, is in the hands of the man in the box and how an indifferent second projectionist at the turn of a knob can ruin the work of everybody from the producer downwards.

I am, Yours sincerely,
KEN CAMERON

Crown Studios,
Station Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

The Editor, Sight and Sound

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Cameron kindly arranged for me a special showing of *Instruments*. While in both his and my own opinion the projection was not altogether above criticism, and while the volume seemed to me to be over-amplified (which was of course merely due to Mr. Cameron's eagerness to let me have the full benefit of undiminished sound intensity), there could not be any doubt about the considerable difference between this screening and even the best of the Curzon performances I attended. In fact, Mr. Cameron appears to have solved the problem as far as it can be solved at the moment, and the discerning music lover who, upon hearing *The Barber of Seville* (cf. p. 63), may have decided never again to enter a cinema, should be persuaded to reconsider his attitude in the light of Mr. Cameron's achievement. If all recordings and projections were on this level, we could at least embark upon studying, and perhaps removing, some of the limitations of sound track recording. Meanwhile, who is needed is either Bernard Shaw as film music critic, or alternatively a small army of competent Cinema Sound Researchers who would have to investigate (a) recordings, and (b) projections in the greatest possible number of cinemas. But before we can realize such a project, we have to realize its urgency. It is only to be hoped that Mr. Cameron's letter will contribute towards this end, or rather towards this beginning.

Yours sincerely,
HANS KELLER

The Editor, Sight and Sound

Dear Sir,—I am shortly publishing a biographical study of the actor-writer-director Erich von Stroheim, and am writing to ask you if you would be good enough to publish this letter so that any of your readers who are interested may be able to help me. Any information, cuttings or photographs relating to von Stroheim's career in Hollywood, and latterly in Europe, would be gratefully received and returned promptly to the senders.

Yours sincerely,
PETER NOBLE,
Editor, *British Film Year-book*,
15, Arnos Grove Court,
London, N.11

The Editor, Sight and Sound

Dear Sir,—I am currently at work on a book on the development and technique of film strip as a visual instructional aid.

Information on the earliest use of film strip is exceedingly sparse.

May I have the courtesy of your columns to request any reader who has knowledge of such authenticated background material to advise me of its origin so that I may consider its conclusion on what will be the first standard work on this subject.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN CURTHOYS

Chenil Galleries, 183, King's Road,
Chelsea London, S.W.3.
20th May, 1947.

The Editor, Sight and Sound

Sir,—May I suggest that it is rather alarming when the journal of the British Film Institute prints without comment a contributor's ingenuous reference to the "occasional stylised backcloth and sets" of *Henry V*.

This film-treatment which in one sentence "served to highlight the reality of the characters" and in the next, per contra, "gave an uncomfortable sense of being cheated", was surely a landmark of film presentation which can never be sufficiently emphasised. Knowledgeable people, especially in other countries, will, I think, look quizzically on this dismissal of the meticulous and beautiful references to the mediaeval missals of the "Book of Hours" and the work of the Dutch Master Brueghel. And how will Sir Laurence Olivier look upon this view of his efforts?

I am, Sir, etc.,
IDA NICHOL

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Preparations and Use of Visual Aids, by Kenneth B. Haas and Harry Q. Packer. (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1946).

This book contains chapters on motion pictures, discussion strip film and sound slide film, training slides, the opaque projector, maps, charts, graphs and diagrams, flash cards, posters and manuals, pictures and photographs, the blackboard and bulletin board, objects, specimens and models, the training laboratory, field trips and television. It is plentifully illustrated by photographs, drawings and diagrams. The book "is designed as a basic or supplementary text suitable as a course in the technique and methods used in the preparation and use of visual aids. In addition to instructor and teacher training courses, it is well adapted to merchandising, advertising and sales promotion".

Best Film Plays, 1945, edited by John Gassner and Dudley Nichols. (New York, Crown Publishers, 1946).

This volume contains ten complete American film scenarios. It is the second annual volume of film plays and the third in the series.

Theatre

The Spring number of "Theatre" (Bradford Civic Playhouse, 2s. 6d.) contains an interesting article on the Film in France by Ruth Partington. The magazine is as well produced and as attractive as usual.

Film Survey, Spring, 1947, edited by Peter Noble. (Pendulum Publications, 1947. 2s.) **Ballet Carnival, March, April, May, 1947**. (Pendulum Publications. 1s. 6d.).
Two more Pendulum publications.

The Technique of Motion Picture Production: A Symposium of Papers Presented at the 51st Semi-annual Convention of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, Hollywood, California. (New York, Interscience Publishers, 1944).

The volume contains the following papers: Technology in the Art of Producing Motion Pictures, Cinematography in the Hollywood Studios, Special Photographic Effects, Re-Recording Sound Motion Pictures, the Technique of Production Sound Recording, Prescoring and Scoring, Illumination in Motion Picture Production, The Paramount Transparency Process Projection Equipment, Motion Picture Laboratory Practices, The Cutting and Editing of Motion Pictures. It is illustrated by diagrams and photographs.

Informational Film Year Book, 1947. (Edinburgh, Albyn Press, 1947, 10s. 6d.).

This new year book is not only a reference guide and directory but also a survey of the informational film in its various branches. As stated in the introduction, this is a period of transition and initiation and many of the contributions indicate the lines on which non-theatrical cinema is likely to develop in the immediate future. Although the directory sections are extensive, they cannot be expected to be complete, as many firms are only gradually getting back into production or have come into being too late to be included in this issue. This should nevertheless prove an extremely useful volume, as it provides accumulated information upon a branch of the cinema, in connection with which hitherto so extremely little has been published. It is illustrated by 25 stills.

Those Saturday Morning Cinema Clubs: A Report, by the National Under Fourteens Council. (National Under Fourteens Council, 1947, 6d.).

The chairman states in the introduction: "I would make it clear at the outset that the furthest thing from the minds of those who formed the Sub-Committee was the making of a destructive attack on the idea of cinema shows specially planned for children. They welcome the idea and fully realise that it contains unlimited possibilities for good, but, in common with many others who have the welfare of the young at heart, they also see great dangers that, quite obviously, were not foreseen by the promoters of the Saturday morning film clubs scattered throughout the land".

Das Nibelungenbuch, mit 24 Bildbeilagen aus dem Decla-ufa Film "Die Nibelungen", von Fritz Lang, von Thea von Harbou. (Munich, Drei Masken Verlag, 1923).

Russische Filmkunst mit 144 Tafeln: Vorwort von Alfred Kerr. (Berlin, Ernst Pollack, 1927).

These two books are now in the reference section of the library of the British Film Institute and should prove interesting to students of the cinema.

Look and Listen: The New Educational Aids Magazine. (30, Fleet Street, E.C.4. 1s. 6d.) (Formerly Instructional Screen).

This is a well produced and illustrated periodical and contains up-to-date information on educational aids.

Penguin Film Review, 2. (Penguin Books, January, 1947, 1/-).

This number includes the following articles: Search for Music, by Thorold Dickinson; Round the World's Studios, by H. H. Wollenberg; Documentary To-day, by Basil Wright; Four Years in a Bottle: a critical study of French film production

under the occupation, by William Novik The American Scene and the Problems of Film Education, by Herbert F. Margolis; The Moscow Script Studio and Soviet Screenwriting, by Catherine de la Roche; French Cinema, by Nicole Vedres; The Scandinavian Film, by Ragna Jackson; and Statistics, by H. H. Wollenberg. It contains a large number of interesting stills, which, however, are not clearly reproduced.

Essai de Grammaire a Cinematographique, by Andre Berthomieu. (Paris, La Nouvelle Edition, 1946).

This little book, by a most experienced film director, was written with the intention of providing a text book for the students of l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinematographiques, and to enlighten all those who are cinema enthusiasts. The author states that the aim of the essay is only to set out some elementary principles, some practical rules, which he has been able to draw up from experience gained in the course of a career during which he has exercised his calling according to no exact methods but in which empiricism combines with improvisation. The book deals with all the technical and artistic operations involved in the making of a film from the writing of the scenario to its completion.

The March of the Movies, by Leslie Mitchell and Harry Alan Towers. (Sampson Low and Marston, 1947. 7s. 6d.).

The authors of the book have been broadcasting a programme with the same title for five years and the same style is evident here. There are 88 pages, 64 illustrations, each occupying a page, the paper is thick, the type large and it is well bound, so that, when one gets down to bedrock, the book does not actually contain a vast amount of information. It is composed chiefly of interviews with those who are at the top of the tree on the various sides of film production and some interesting points are made.

A NOTE FROM POLAND

A U.N.E.S.C.O. Press Release States

In the two years which have passed since the liberation of Poland the film industry of that country has been hard at work building itself up from the state of complete ruin in which it was left by German devastation and occupation. Some idea of conditions in June, 1945, may be gathered from the fact that out of an approximate total of 800 cinemas existing in Poland before the war, only 200 were intact at the liberation; there were no studios left, and practically no technical equipment. Worse even than this was the shortage of trained personnel, for very many had been killed during the war. Under these circumstances, in a country reduced to chaos, the Polish government set about rebuilding the film industry. The task fell to the government because there was no sign anywhere else of the authority and the means to carry it out.

Accordingly, films were nationalised—the national body being the Film Polski, which is responsible for all the different branches of the industry—production,

distribution, exhibition, production of equipment, scientific research and technical training.

When Film Polski started work to build a modern film industry it was necessary to begin by building studios and by building the cinemas, or re-building those which had been damaged. This latter work has been going on at the rate of three cinemas re-opened every two days in the period ending last Christmas, and up to the present 539 theatres have been rebuilt. To compensate for shortage of cinemas, there are 45 mobile units in constant operation, most of them bought in Russia. In eight months an entire studio and laboratory was built at Lodz, and a new studio is under construction outside Warsaw.

There are still severe shortages; very little film stock, for example, is produced in the country. Until about nine months ago what there was came from Russia, but since then the Agfa factory in Berlin has been supplying some following an agreement with the Allied Reparations Commission. France is also selling stock to Poland and negotiations are going on

between Film Polski and the Kodak Company in the United States.

At present there are only two factories for the manufacture of film equipment, but as manpower and machinery become available the facilities of these factories are being constantly enlarged. A great deal of equipment including projectors are being bought in France, where an office has been opened to look after the interests of Film Polski abroad. Other equipment is being bought in Russia.

The only studio operating at present is that at Lodz, the headquarters of Film Polski; it has two stages, a puppet film studio and a large laboratory for processing; the production until now has been mostly shorts. The production of puppet films by two directors, MM. Wasilewski and Portotski, who work their puppets and operate their cameras at the same time, is in full swing.

The first feature production *Forbidden Songs* was finished some time ago, and a second feature, *Two Hours*, is in production at Lodz. A third feature, *Dividing Road*, is being shot in the Barrandov

Studios in Prague, which for the time being are too large to be fully occupied with Czech work.

In view of the shortage of feature films agreements have been reached with foreign firms for the supply of their products. Thus, 40 films have been bought in France, 10 in Britain (with 30 more

under consideration), 65 in the United States and 10 films in Sweden.

Negotiations are nearly complete for the showing of about 20 British films distributed by E.L.D.

A very urgent problem is that of training technicians and arrangements are being made for personnel to be trained in Czechoslovakia and France, though it is also hoped to take advantage of Unesco plan to provide scholarship for technical workers outside Poland.

Wage levels are about the same as in other comparable industries in the country, but technicians are not subject to income tax.

THE FILM SOCIETIES

Glasgow Film Society

The Glasgow Film Society, which was founded as long ago as 1929, operates along rather different lines from most other British Film Societies, as continental and particularly French films are regularly shown commercially in the city. The fact that it has been able to formulate and operate a policy independent of showing French films, brought into the country for commercial showing in London, will be perhaps consoling news to the committees of other Film Societies.

The Society holds monthly meetings—afternoon and evening—in the Cosmo Cinema, and its membership, 1150, is determined by the seating capacity. There is a considerable waiting list.

At the end of each season the Members are invited to take part in a plebiscite on which feature film they have liked best. The voting for this season may be of general interest.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Munchausen | 160 votes |
| 2. Die Goldene Stadt (The Golden City) | 125 " |
| 3. Ordet | 84 " |
| 4. Farewell Again | 76 " |
| 5. Anna Christie | 68 " |
| 6. Battle for Music | 54 " |
| 7. The Gold Rush | 45 " |
| 8. Musik in Blut | 17 " |

None of the first three films is sub-titled in English, and each was shown with an interpolated commentary prepared by the Society.

On 17th May, the Glasgow Film Society gave a dinner in honour of the Czech visitors attending the Czechoslovakian Film Festival held in the Cosmo Cinema.

The Sydney Film Society

The Sydney Film Society is expanding its activities considerably in its new season, and besides the regular monthly documentary screening, a Sunday afternoon show of 35 mm. "classics" and Continental films has been inaugurated. The features for the past two months have been *La Grande Illusion* and *Alexander Nevsky*. British, German and American programmes will follow. These programmes have attracted many new members.

Aiming to strengthen the Film Society movement, which is steadily growing, the Society, which is the largest in Australia, is organising a Federation of Australian Film Societies, and the B.F.I.'s proposal of an Imperial Film Society is fully endorsed.

The Society's magazine, "Film", is being printed monthly this year, and, as the only publication in Australia which treats the Cinema seriously, is receiving

widespread circulation and attention. Other activities of the Society are the organising of a Scientific Film Group in Sydney, and a campaign for the improvement of children's programmes, in conjunction with the Parents' and Citizens' Association and other bodies. With the acquisition of a larger hall for 16 mm. shows at hand, more varied and frequent documentary programmes are being planned. Recent speakers at these screenings have included Stanley Hawes, the Producer-in-Chief to the Australian National Film Board, Harry Watt, and Ralph Smart. A very successful Reception was held in May to welcome Harry Watt and his Unit on their return to Australia.

The exchange of publications and programmes with other Film Societies will be welcomed. Address Hon. Sec. Mr. Malcolm Otton, 5 "Windsor", Iluka St. Rose Bay, Sydney, Australia.

Bournemouth Film Society

This Society was formed in January under the auspices of the Bournemouth Arts Club, to which it remains affiliated. It holds monthly Sunday evening shows on 35mm. in the News Theatre, and during the winter will hold in addition a number of shows on 16mm.

The session opened on May 18th with an all French programme consisting of *Quai des Brumes*, together with a Lumière Programme, a French Newsreel, and *Mor Vran*; this was followed in June by *l'Eternel Retour*, with *Colour Box*, *Zviratka a Petrovsti* and *Gaiété Parisienne*. Other features booked for this session include *M*, *l'Homme Qui Cherche la Verite*, and *Lone White Sail*, and one 16mm. programme of *Film and Reality* and *Chaplin's First Films*.

In June Dr. Roger Manvell lectured to a crowded and appreciative audience on *The Film Industry and its Social Influence*.

A one-day Summer School is being planned for Saturday, September 13th, at Canford School (about 8 miles from Bournemouth). This will be open to the public, and members of other Film Societies will be especially welcome. It is hoped to make the theme *The Director and the Script-writer*; and to have a morning and an afternoon session and a general discussion after tea, followed by dinner and a film show. Details are now being settled, and the full programme will shortly be issued. All who are interested are asked to write for this, and for any other information about the Society, to the Secretary, Miss Margaret Jolliffe, 64b, Wellington Road, Bournemouth (Tel.: B'mouth 575).

Spain—Cineclub de Zaragoza

The Cineclub de Zaragoza was founded in December, 1945, with a membership of 700. Films are shown twice monthly and have included Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid*, *The Idle Class*, and *One Night Out*; Epstein's *La Chute de la Maison Usher* and *L'Auberge Rouge*; *Der Student von Prag*; Fischinger's *Symphonie in Blau*; Kirsanoff's *Rapt*; Paul Fejo's *Schneestral*; Ruttmann's *Manesmann* and *Die Melodie de Welt*; Lang's *Metropolis* and *Die Nibelungen*; *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*; Christian Anuander's Spanish *Un dia en Santiago*; Juan de Orduna (Spain) *Suite granadina*; José Maria de Codian (Spain, 1908) *Don Juan Tenorio*; Feyder's *Carmen*; Piero Fosco's *Cabiria*; Dieterle's *Story of Louis Pasteur*; Crosland's *Don Juan*; Maurice Tourneur's *The Island of Lost Ships*; Marcel L'Herbier's *Feu Mathias Pascal*, and others.

The Secretary of the Society, Eduardo Ducay (Mefisto 4, 2° Zaragoza, Spain) would like to exchange programmes and correspond with English Societies.

The Planet Film Society

The Society's 1947-48 programme and new financial year begins in September, and the Film Appreciation Section has planned nine monthly meetings during the period September to May for screening such films as *The 39 Steps*, *Steel*, *Portrait of Maria*, *The Italian Straw Hat*, *The Lost Horizon*, *Papageno*, *Edge of the World*, *Prelude to War*, *The Last Laugh*, *The New Janitor*, *The Last Chance*, *Film and Reality*, etc., and one complete programme of outstanding British prize-winning film productions on 16 mm. Full details of the whole programme, subscriptions, etc., may be obtained from the Hon. Sec., Miss Hilda Collins, "Beam Ends", Belmont Avenue, Cockfosters, Herts. The meetings will be held in the Southgate, North London, area.

It is also hoped to extend the activities of the Film Production Section, which is open to all amateur cinematographers interested in making films on substandard gauges. Seven 16 mm. entries were screened at the annual competition for members' films in May; the Planet Trophy and a special leader is awarded to the makers of the film which is voted by members to be the best.

Wanted—Sight and Sound Nos. 4 and 6. Please write to J. R. Cottrill, 22, Eastfield Rd., Western Park, Leicester.

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